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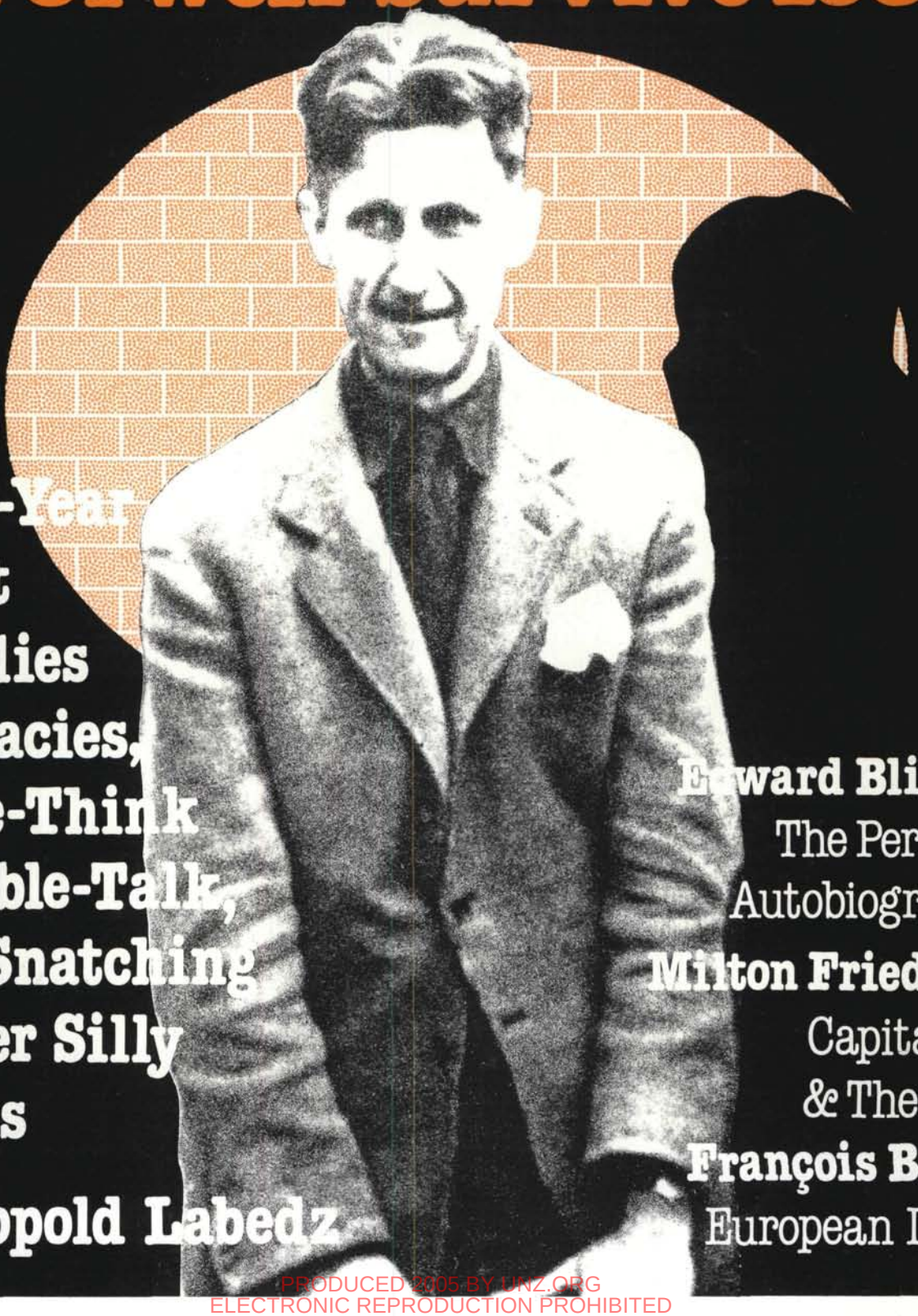

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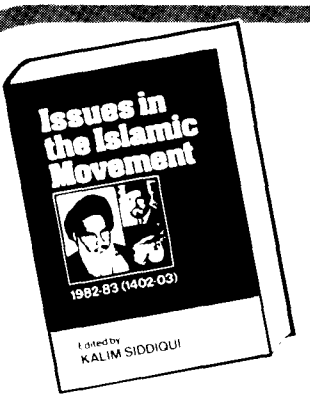

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Jorge Ibargüengoitia

Margarita's Marriage

RAMÓN AND I knew each other from the time we were children but we became friends when we went to college in Cuévano and lived in the same boarding-house. At that time, Ramón was a thin young man who wore hard collars and worsted suits discarded by his brother "Handsome", to whom they had been handed down by don Enrique, their father, who was noted in Muérdago for being an elegant dresser but on the thrifty side. Every Monday he sent each of his children who were going to school in Cuévano a six-peso postal money order for pocket money. This amount was more than enough for "Handsome" since he was a model young man, but to Ramón six pesos was a bagatelle. He thought up a business which had the advantage of requiring no astuteness, effort, or capital. Using his father as guarantor—without his being aware of it—he obtained premises which he named The Warehouse. Next, on the basis of nothing but promises, he secured the services of a very honest man who became the manager. Ramón was the "agent." On commission, he "accepted" at The Warehouse anything and everything that did not spoil and which was needed by everybody, from coal and wood to wax candles. Ramón did nothing outside of going to The Warehouse daily to divide up the commissions with the manager.

Ramón, thanks to The Warehouse, and I, thanks to Ramón's generosity, lived out our student years in comfort. Weekdays after classes, we got together with friends at The Classroom, a bar on Sun Street, opposite the university. Each time Ramón paid for a round, he would get the money back later by playing twenty-one. In the evenings we played billiards and on Saturdays we went invariably to señora Aurelia's place in the Malaquitas alley which was the only whorehouse in Cuévano for decent people. On Sundays, however, we attended eleven o'clock Mass at the parish church and then played tennis at Doctor Miranda's house, until the doctor invited us to dinner. The three Miranda daughters fell in love with Ramón and he, in time, became the beau of the oldest daughter, Margarita.

Supposedly, we were studying law but we rarely went to class, preferring, in addition to the pastimes mentioned, to go swimming in the Tepozanes reservoir, fight the cows in the Palito corral, or simply sit around in Constitution Square watching the people go by. We were there one day when "Handsome" came over to us and said to Ramón, "You have dragged the family name through the mud."

When Ramón realised that what "Handsome" was referring to was that he should have been attending his Roman law class at that hour, he burst out laughing.

As was to be expected, we flunked out in our third year and returned to Muérdago, our home town. Ramón took over the management of The Yoke hacienda which belonged to his father, and I went to work in La Fe drugstore which belonged to my mother. Although we didn't have as much in the way of amusement as we used to when we were students, Ramón and I would see each other daily. We became members of the Casino and played billiards every afternoon. On Saturdays at five o'clock sharp we would be on the train to Cuévano. When we arrived there we would take a room at the Palace Hotel. That night we would visit señora Aurelia's place and on Sunday we attended eleven o'clock Mass and played tennis at the Miranda house until the doctor invited us for dinner. Margarita produced wonders in the kitchen every Sunday, and every Sunday on the train back to Muérdago Ramón would say to me, looking through the window at the hills in the evening twilight, "I love Margarita very much and I am going to marry her, but not right away."

Three years went by.

ONE SATURDAY NIGHT, doña Aurelia received us with special enthusiasm. "I have something that could have been made to order for you boys." When we wanted to know what it was, she explained, "It's a girl who just arrived from the hot country."

We accepted this news with certain reservations inasmuch as doña Aurelia had in the past come up with an assortment of frights. But, that night, she parted the strings of beads that hung in the doorway that opened off the foyer and called in a tall, well-built girl who, despite the dress she was wearing, looked very elegant. She was a mulatta with honey-coloured eyes. Sitting at the table with us and doña Aurelia, she spoke little, keeping her

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eyes cast down, said her name was Estela, and that she was not from the tropical coast but had been born at The Cauldron—a farm way up in the hills known for its mineral springs. Doña Aurelia went on making conversation until Ramón interrupted her to ask me, "Are you going with her or am I?"

We tossed a coin for Estela and Ramón won.

When I left señora Aurelia's place, I returned to the hotel and went to bed. It was getting light when I woke up. Ramón was sitting on his bed taking off his shoes. On seeing me awake, he said, "She's very attractive."

Sunday began as usual. We attended Mass, played tennis, Doctor Miranda invited us for dinner, Margarita prepared delights, and so on. However, as we walked towards the station carrying our suitcases, Ramón suddenly stopped and said to me, "Do me a favour. When you get to Muérdago, go over to my house and explain to my mother that a classmate of ours died and I had to stay over for the wake. Tell her I'll be back tomorrow on the eight o'clock train."

I agreed to do it, he walked me to the station, and before saying goodbye we invented the deceased's name—Gonzalo Gonzaga. He crossed the little square near the station, almost at a run. Judging by the route he took, I realised he was heading straight for the Malaquitas alley.

And so began the most hectic period in Ramón's life. Besides the trips we made every Saturday, he spent two or three weekday nights in Cuévano, returning on the eight o'clock train to Muérdago where a peon would be waiting for him at the station with horses to ride to The Yoke. This activity did not pass unnoticed. Inevitably, rumours were started and one of them would have had to reach Doctor Miranda's ears. One Sunday he did not invite us to dinner. Margarita nearly fainted. We said goodbye to the family very politely and went to eat at the Palace Hotel. We sat in silence until the fruit paste and cheese they always served for dessert was in front of us, when Ramón said, "I know what I am going to do. I am going to bring her to live in Muérdago."

"Margarita?"

"No, Leonor."

"Who is Leonor?"

"Estela. Her name is Leonor Alcántara."

"Are you going to marry her?"

"No, I'm going to marry Margarita."

During the following days, I helped him look for a house in Muérdago. We found one in the San José section near the brick works that seemed suitable to Ramón.

"That section gets flooded in the rainy season", I warned him.

"That's right", he said, "but it has the advantage that nobody knows me there."

He bought the house, had it painted, and installed running water, which it did not have, and a toilet. I asked him why he did not have a hot-water heater and bathtub put in while he was at it.

"It would be wasted", he told me, "because I am going to stay on in my own house and Leonor is used to bathing in a wash-tub."

After Leonor came to live in Muérdago, Ramón made fewer and fewer trips to Cuévano. One day, he explained to me, "I love Margarita very much and one of these days I am going to marry her. The reason I don't go to Cuévano very often is that there are pot-holes in the tennis court."

I was there the day the engagement was broken off. After several weeks of not going to Cuévano, we made the effort and went one Sunday morning. On entering the church to attend eleven o'clock Mass, we saw a mining engineer, a widower with three children, sitting in one of the pews reading from the prayer book Margarita Miranda was holding in her hand. Ramón turned to me and said, "Frankly, I see no point in my staying for the sermon."

We left the church during the offertory. Not only didn't we play tennis at the Mirandas again but we never went to Mass again.

WHEN DON ENRIQUE DIED, he left the house on Sonaja Street to "Handsome" who was married and had children. Ramón had to go and live with Leonor in the little house in the San José section which got flooded in August. After he had lived there for a number of years, he said to me one day, "In a certain sense, my life has been a failure. I'm Jesus Christ's age and don't even have a bathroom yet."

He had to go clear across Muérdago to the Russian baths at the Casino.

Ramón never spoke of Leonor by her name, and when he did it was always in the most indirect possible way. For example, he would say, "Shirts are nicely ironed at the house." Or, "They don't know how to make spaghetti."

One day when we were in Pedrones, he had me pick out a very fine perfume. "Being a druggist, you ought to know about such things", he said, but he did not tell me who it was for. Later on, I noticed from the calendar that the following day was Saint Leonor's Day.

I don't believe I saw Leonor more than three times during the first fifteen years she lived in Muérdago. The first occasion was on the street that goes up Owl Hill. There was a fruit stand there that was selling prickly pears and she was leaning over picking out the good ones. I had slowed down as I walked up the alley to admire her shape, not realising it was Leonor. I must have blushed because when she noticed me, it made her laugh. "Good morning, Pepe", she said as she went by me with her basket over her arm.

Another time, I urgently needed a signature from Ramón on a note at an hour when I knew he would be with Leonor at the house in the San José section, and I went there to talk to him. Leonor opened the door and was pleased to see me. "Come this way", she said.

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She spoke to me in the familiar form because that was how she had addressed me the day we met at señora Aurelia's. She had me sit down in the foyer and went to notify Ramón who soon emerged in his shirt-sleeves, looking very solemn.

As we were discussing the papers he was to sign, Leonor brought in a tray covered with a very white napkin upon which there was a bottle of mezcal, two glasses, and canapés of imported lobster. Ramón and I ate and drank pretending to be very absorbed in the documents, as though it were the waiter at the Casino who was serving us and we were accustomed to eating lobster every day.

The third time I saw her was one morning when she came into the drug-store and, without greeting me, said, "Ramón is very sick."

"What's wrong with him?"

"A pain here", she said, putting her hand to her abdomen.

We went with Canalejas to the little house in the San José section. Canalejas examined Ramón and diagnosed acute appendicitis. We took Ramón to Pedrones which had the only modern hospital in the state of Plan de Abajo at that time. The superintendent was a nun and would not let Leonor in because when Ramón gave his personal data he had said he was single. Realising the touchiness of the situation, Ramón said, "That's it, then. We'll get married."

They were married in the hallway, outside the operating room. Canalejas and I were the witnesses at the civil wedding and the best men at the religious ceremony. The operation was a success and Ramón received the kind of attention from the sisters during his convalescence that was befitting a patient who was both a wealthy man and a repentant sinner. When he was discharged, he returned to the house in the San José section and carried on his life with Leonor as usual.

"I can't explain it", Ramón confessed to me one day, "but being married embarrasses me more than living in sin."

When the land reform movement came to Plan de Abajo, Ramón offered to buy "Handsome's" share of The Yoke which he sold to him for 23,000 pesos, thinking he had made a killing. However, as time went by and The Yoke was not divided up and distributed, "Handsome" took it badly and said that his brother had conspired with the government to buy up his heritage for peanuts. That anger and the upright life he led—he was one of the worst hypocrites I ever knew—put him into an early grave. Oddly enough, in a person who never took a drink, he died of what Canalejas diagnosed as cirrhosis of the liver, and stranger still in one who was careful about money to the point of miserliness, he left nothing when he died but debts. Ramón helped the family by buying the house on Sonaja Street from them for 15,000 pesos, paid for the moving so that they would vacate promptly, and went to live there with Leonor whom the decent folk of Muérdago knew as "the woman Ramón was keeping in the San José section." Zenaida went to work for them then.

Ramón removed all traces left behind in the house by "Handsome's" family—he made a bonfire with a Divine Countenance and some purple curtains—and restored it to the way it had been in the time of his parents. Those who were expecting Ramón to give a reception to present his wife to Muérdago society were left waiting, and the only ones ever invited to the house were Canalejas, Zorrilla, and me. The food was excellent and Leonor entered the dining-room only to supervise the serving.

One day, when we were in the town square we saw Margarita Miranda passing by with her husband and stepchildren. Ramón said to me, "I owe my having been saved from that fate to doña Aurelia."

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Geography Lesson

Here we have the sea of children; here,
a tiny piece of Europe with dark hair.
She's crying. I am sitting next to her.

Thirty yellow suns blobbed on cheap paper,
thirty skies blue as a Smith's salt wrapper
are fading in the darkness of this weeper.

She's Czechoslovakia. And all the desks
are shaking now. The classroom window cracks
and melts. I've caught her sobs like chicken-pox.

Czechoslovakia, though I've never seen
your cities, I have somehow touched your skin.
You're all the hurt geography I own.

Carol Rumens

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Edward Blishen

The Perils of Autobiography

To date I have written nine grossly autobiographical books without once being sued or tarred and feathered. So it might seem that I should be discussing autobiography, not as a dangerous activity, but as an almost contemptibly safe literary practice.

Yet the more often I get away with it, the more I'm impressed by the ridiculous risks that the form involves. As I am by the position, as I see it, that whoever writes in a plainly autobiographical fashion is merely an extreme form of other and more reputable kinds of writer—all the non-autobiographers, the creators especially of absolute fiction. He who frankly uses the first person does with trembling openness what they do with nervous furtiveness: the fact being that all writers are blabbermouths. I know none of them, however much or however little autobiographical, who is entirely at ease with his family, or friends, or acquaintances. In a sense we are all haunted by the man who himself haunted Arnold Bennett—that lawyer's clerk who appeared perfectly recognisable and in no favourable light in Bennett's first novel, and never sued him. But whenever he caught sight of his former colleague, usually in the Strand, he would halt and fix him with an intolerable, intent, sorrowful eye. Bennett said he'd rather be sued any time.

I have intimate experience of such uneases. In Barnet, north of London, where I live and have always lived, and which I have taken the feeble trouble of converting into a place called Barton; in Hadley Wood, the precise corner where I have my home, which I have ridiculously renamed Barley Wood; in these places, I am much of the time divided by a whisker from horsewhippings. Some acquaintances would like to horsewhip me for putting them in my books: some for leaving them out. The fact being that, on the whole, human beings prefer to hide the details of their private lives, and quite a few details of their public lives, within the circle of an arm . . . in that fashion in which, as a child, one prevented the boy or girl in the next desk from copying the mistakes one was making oneself in English or Arithmetic.

I'd have been happy enough to be a blameless novelist or innocent poet, but see myself as doomed to this other damnable literary fate. That's to say, I began my first formal attempt at autobiography as long ago as 7 August 1934. That was Day 59 of my Journal—which I've kept ever since, though I confess I've shrunk from the horror of continuing to number the days. (The first volume has a Greek epigraph, which I hope I understood at the age of fourteen, for I certainly don't understand it at the age of sixty-three.) The passage that makes it clear that I was a doomed creature begins:

> "I feel an irresistible desire to write something about my life—something which may be remembered now but forgotten soon.
>
> I was born in a nursing home at Whetstone on the twenty-ninth day of April, nineteen hundred and twenty. My mother and father are what the French would call *bourgeois*, or the English, middle-class: my father, indeed, is even more to be complimented on that account, having been born and bred in the manner of the poorest. . . ."

And so on. Several pages: in a distinctly sequent style which I've since tried to avoid, or evade. I think if one is writing autobiography in 1934, and in 1984 is still writing it, then this reference to doom is not out of place. And I believe the truth for me is that, from the beginning, I was drawn to a notion that left me with no alternative but to write as I do: that life itself is a fiction.

An instant example of how this notion works. Yesterday afternoon as I sat in an upstairs room writing, looking down on the lane in which I live, I caught sight of a man who'd been exercising his dog in the field opposite. I am rather obvious, sitting there. The gate to the field is directly opposite the window where I sit: most people look up, inevitably. He never looks up.

I have known him for over fifty years and he has always had that kind of politeness. It isn't simply that he was told as a child that to stare was rude: deeply, he believes it *is* rude: if that sort of gentlemanliness didn't exist, he would invent it. The dog is extremely small, its fur a mass of little waves (it is much like the dog in the painting of the Arnolfinis). He is a very large man. The dog and he, contradicting a sense one has of the desirability of companions having some compatibility, are at odds. In the matter of a man and a dog, they represent extremes of dissimilarity. They really shouldn't be together. Ever since I can remember, he has been yoked to creatures, and objects, of this kind of visual unfittingness. He is married to a small and

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very beautiful wife; not as small as the dog, but somehow a representative of a sort of absolute smallness, as he's a representative of an absolute largeness. I can remember him, fifty years ago, with a yo-yo, which was normal-sized, but in his hands almost infinitesimal. In no circumstances whatever, I mean outside the home, does he wear anything on his head but a trilby hat. He has an earnest mild face, perfectly polite, and somehow for over fifty years I have thought of him as a thin orderly crust of a person beneath whose surface great fires must burn. I feel there must be occasions on which the crust breaks, the fire spectacularly blazes out, and I have in my time thought those occasions must be linked to his wife's considerable beauty. On the other hand, that may say more about me than about him: to him, his beautiful wife may be no more, though certainly no less, than an element in the general decent orderliness of life as clearly he sees it or is determined to see it. He is, by the way, strangely larger at the top than at the bottom: he dwindles as you look down from his head to his feet.

I have not, I must add, set out to fictionalise this old acquaintance of mine in any of the obvious ways. Given the limits of my vision, that is how he is: that is how a policeman standing in a witness box would have to swear he was. But the fact is that I'm in the strange position of feeling that he is, by some instant process, a character out of fiction.

It is not so much that I cannot distinguish fiction from fact. It is, I think, that early on I found I felt something that might be expressed like this: that novels were novels, but that life was a novel, too. My old friend is a character in that novel that arises from the overlapping of the novel of which he is the central character, and the novel of which the central character is myself. I delight beyond words in the fact that, in Chapter 67, he is such a recognisable late variant of what he was in Chapter 3.

I HAVE, and have always had, this aberrant view of things, of life and fiction as adjoining rooms, with the door between them wide open, the daylight from one confused with the daylight from the other: and aside from this being simply a view of things, it is a perception of life that, as a writer, sparks me off.

For example: in writing my autobiographies, I cannot use totally invented material, for that would carry me into what, for me, would be unreality. But I cannot, at the same time, cling as close to facts as would be represented by my giving the characters in my books their own names—though, in many cases, this would be a perfectly harmless thing to do. If I gave anything its real name, I'd feel I was in the world of the authentic memoir. For a long time I attempted to avoid using my own name; and in my early days as an autobiographer this involved me in inventing large numbers of characters who could never remember what I was called, and addressed me as Mr Um or Mr Er. My wife has a name to which fiction could offer no objection, she is called Nancy; but I am obliged to call her Kate. If I were to call her Nancy, I should be giving evidence in the witness box, I should be on oath: and on that particular kind of oath, I do not wish to be. The dullness of the literal world would descend upon me: and the purely literal, the untreated raw fact, belongs to my perception neither of fiction nor of the other thing, which I do not wish to call by that meanly negative title, non-fiction. The perils of autobiography, in these circumstances, include those endured by one's wives: or, as in my case (something reviewers sometimes point to, as a mark of my despicable humdrumness), one's wife. To my wife, people say: "Ah, you are his second! May one ask what happened to Kate?"

All this somehow guarantees my creative hold on the thing. It really is a story that I am telling. It is the truth, but I have renamed it. I departed from this policy only when, after her death, I came to write about my mother. There was no possibility of calling her by anything but her maiden name, which was Lizzie Pye—very much the sort of name I invent: but, more than that, the name to which she had absolute right by way of having merged in herself the real and what I must call the fabulous.

I remember talking some time ago about this—about being moved by the way life composed itself into stories, about my problem being to keep pace with the stories, about having kept a diary for nearly fifty years because I was terrified of the notion of letting days pass unrecorded and so unacknowledged—about a son of mine imitating me once and then saying he'd stopped recording the story of each day because he found he was living for his diary. I was talking about all this, and someone said, impatiently: "Oh, but then you're just a journalist!" And I understood his impatience, but also felt that the whole question had been raised of another sort of overlapping: that of journalism, the response to immediate events, the discernment of shape in the muddle under one's nose, and literature, for some of which the same description will serve. I must say here that I am making no claims for myself, only offering my being such an aberrant in the field as a focus for examining the matter of what literature is: so much of it capable of being seen as the product of a tension between the spontaneous and the long-considered. So many writers: so many different ways of transforming and shaping the material they use.

I HAVE TRIED to explain why I feel bound to write what I wish it were possible to call something else than autobiography, since *that* starts up expectations that I don't set out to realise. I am never sure whether to be ashamed of it or not. I remember once being overwhelmed with dismay when a novelist I much admire said he'd been reading something of mine: I murmured that it was not in the same world as his fiction, and he was very stern, asking why I said that. Every writer had to find the form that was fitting for him. What was the superior virtue of fiction that I was pointing to? In fact, I have no doubt at all that fiction is superior, for at least two obvious reasons.

The first is that autobiography as I write it is possible only to the hopelessly amiable man or woman. It is otherwise impossible to write of recognisable or near-recognisable persons without inviting a succession of law-suits. I am, as it happens, helplessly affectionate, I easily like people, I feel a pity for almost everyone for the impossible burden laid upon him or her, the burden of being human: with the very great burden added of the attempt, quite generally undertaken, to be a

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decent human being. I don't mention this sort of thing as a virtue. I have been reviewed too often not to know that such benignity is found by many commentators to be almost unendurable. Many of them quote against me a comment of my father's that I once recorded: "You've a good word to say for everyone", he said, poor angry man. "Sometimes you drive me up the wall!" It was a bad move on the part of the creator, to give a father who enjoyed being ill-natured, a good-natured son: and vice versa. I manage, I think, sometimes, to give an edge to what I say, I hope I don't suggest a mere passive approval of people and affairs. Indeed, I know I don't: for my first book, in which I expressed my amazement and anger at the inadequacies of the education provided for boys in a corner of Islington in the early 1950s, I would have been dismissed by the LCC if dismissing me would not have drawn more attention to the book than letting me stay. But—I come to the other evident shortcoming of autobiography—I cannot really speak in the clear, wholly in the clear, unless my characters are dead. Which inevitably makes of me something of a sneak. I am struck by the thought that this is one of the few terms that have not been used against me, and I offer it to reviewers. "This is the work of a sneak. *The Observer.*"

THERE IS ANOTHER PERIL that I plainly run into by writing what is, or seems to be, or can only be called, autobiography. Especially when it is spread over many books. The peril is that I shall be accused of not noticing, of being infatuatedly unaware, that my life is extremely ordinary, almost devoid of event. A critic who makes this point every time he reviews me offered, in respect of the last, or the last but last—he reviews them all in exactly the same head-patting fashion—a criterion for his sense of the ordinariness of my existence: why, he said, I had not even run away with someone else's wife.

I was astonished by this. Actually, I have been married to the same woman for thirty-five years: and in a modern setting this seems to me to be an ingredient in my life that is almost melodramatic. It makes that large part of it almost too eventful, and distinctly the reverse of ordinary. But the fact is that I'm not sure what is meant by ordinary life, and I do see that the accusation that one is rather ridiculously trying to make books out of ordinariness is levelled at autobiography when it would not be levelled at fiction concerned with the same subject matter: the agony and comedy of teaching, the difficulty of being a parent and a child, the very great difficulties of being married; one corner of a World War; first and farcical love; death; Africa, and Africans; old age; and so forth. In fact, I find all life extraordinary. I stir to great events, to thrilling stories, of course, as anyone does, but I also see that the life and death of a perfectly humdrum human being is a mirror and concentration of all great events and all thrilling stories.

I AM BOUND, the fact is, to feel that we use the word "autobiography" too variously. We tend not to distinguish between kinds, and between intentions. There is this whole large tendency to say that a memoirist, an autobiographer, ought to have something conventionally extraordinary to relate. He ought to have earned, through various forms of public importance or through his presence at great events, the *right* to autobiography. So, one strand of the attack on the autobiography whose approach is of another kind is to suggest that the author is arrogating to himself a privilege indulgently reserved to various sorts of plain and evident human importance. Well, that criterion of running or not running away with wives . . . or presumably with husbands. It's an addition to the criteria that justify the writing of autobiography. The comedy and strain of a marriage that works—no subject at all. The comedy and strain of a marriage that doesn't—*welcome*! Crockery is of interest only when it is being broken. Your crack-up is your only drama. And so on.

I must say I sometimes hear these accusations in the voice of a former headmaster of mine at school: whom I've never been able altogether to forget, because I've met him so often since in this guise or that.

But yes, yes, yes, Blishen, I hear him declare: yes, Blishen. I have to say we none of us thought you'd quite got it in you to . . . get much further than autobiography. Your essays at school. So personal. Turning everything into a story. Advantages and Disadvantages of a Channel Tunnel . . . perfectly clear topic, unemotional, impersonal: and what do you do, Blishen? Serve us up a story—reminiscence, or so-called reminiscence. Dreadful interest in yourself. Self-absorbed. Something we do struggle against here. I understand that in nearly fifty years time you're going to argue that most of what you write, though autobiographical, is not about yourself, at all. It's about other people, and about places. And about quite common, quite general features of human existence: like loving, and dying, and trying to be a son or a father: or about falling on our faces as, I believe you mean to allege, so many of us do so much of the time. About *yourself*, in that it's a subject you know much about, and you count yourself along with the other people: *another person*, a largely comic creature like the rest. Oh dear, Blishen. Not content with being fatally personal about everything, and frightfully over-emotional, you're also a cunning little maker of theories. That's another thing we struggle against, you know. *Sly* theorising!

When in fact this old headmaster of mine and I exchanged shots with one another in the local newspaper over an educational issue, *his* letter concluded by apologising for using the word "I": he'd used it twice. It was cunningly done to suggest I use no other word! How can I regard him as anything but a creature quite splendidly intent on being fictitious?

OF COURSE MY SORT OF autobiography is an uneasy mode: it purports to be fact, but has a great deal of the character of fiction. Where am I? the reader may complain. There *is* a semantic, a dictionary problem. I find an interesting illustration of it in making a comparison between Anthony Powell's twelve-volume novel *A Dance to the Music of Time*, and his volumes of memoirs. They cover the same period, they discuss the same people, they both form autobiographies: but one takes the material of Powell's experience and shapes it, exploring the connections between its parts—that pattern of human experience that rests so much on coincidence, on the punctuation of a man or woman's existence that may be pro-

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vided over the years by scattered meetings with friends and acquaintances and enemies—the pattern, indeed, of the human dance—and the other is a strict memoir, reporting on the same existence in, essentially, the manner of a policeman in the witness box.

"I kept observation on the author of this memoir on 29 April 1920, and came to the conclusion, M'Lud, that he was being born."

In memoirs, you do not reach for much by way of art. I must of course exclude certain outstanding memoirists, Gibbon and Trollope and Edmund Gosse and Edwin Muir and Jean-Jacques Rousseau and others: but they occupy, in this matter of the actual use of the word "autobiography", middle ground. They all have the quality of finding art difficult to avoid. But then—as I put it to myself: autobiography cannot help being fiction, since, to human beings, non-fiction is not possible. We are not that sort of machine, and cannot make observations fine enough to exclude fiction. . . .

But to return to Anthony Powell—obviously he knows perfectly the difference between the autobiography that becomes twelve novels, and the autobiography that becomes two or three volumes of memoirs. I think he mischievously presses the difference, by often making the hinges of his memoirs even dryer than such hinges tend to be, when compared with the subtler joints that we find in writing that doesn't *pretend* to adhere to what we *pretend* to recognise as fact.

"It was in the middle of 1926, immediately after the collapse of my second marriage", says the memoirist. (Not Powell, I hasten to say, a securely-married man who appears to have escaped critical condemnation for this flaw.) And there are things that are usefully said in such a fashion: a good volume of memoirs has its own special attractiveness and value. But I do not believe that the memoirist's method, his "It was in the middle of 1926 . . ." and so on, offers any guarantee that what he says is more reliable, closer to something that might be called the truth, even more accurate, than any other method. If the reader is crying out to know where he is, in relation to the truth of things, he is no better helped here than elsewhere: or no worse, as the case may be. And I stress this because I am used to being accused of unreliability, as compared with a memoirist, who is on oath. I sometimes think that, compared with him, I am on double oath. I have to substantiate the attempted truth of what I write by something more reliable, I would hold, than a date, or an exact succession of events, or a sober recital of cause and effect; or a general policy of taking things as they *appear* to have occurred.

That leaves, of course, the simple question of accuracy, which people inquire about rather querulously at times: reminding me of my sons when they were small, properly cross if it were not certain if one was talking fact or talking fancy. I must say I am not deeply worried about literal accuracy, regarding it as being much of the time beyond my reach. I recognise always the nature of the positive *lie* in which I have no interest, the invention that literally *belies* the general feeling and general nature of my memory. If I hang bits and pieces of memory together, as I must, such joy as comes from doing it rests very much on my getting it, in some inwardly recognised sense, right. There is no point at all in making a fuss about accuracy. Most formal autobiographies puff and fidget about being correct, in sophisticated forms of that rigmarole that goes: it was on Monday, no, I lie, it was on Tuesday, although it may have been Wednesday, I suppose. . . . Anyone who has kept a diary over a long period so that from time to time he's consulted by his family about things that happened—for confirmation that it was like this rather than like that—has had the experience, which happens ninety-nine times out of a hundred, of discovering that everyone was wrong about everything. It wasn't *then*, it wasn't about *that*, *those* people weren't present, and *that* wasn't the outcome. Memory is, to put it gently, inventive. Fuss, I would say, about accuracy, by all means, but do not expect too much from it—or of it!

I do now begin to see that I should be writing under quite another title. Something about the defence and justification of a hybrid form to which it is difficult to attach any term but "autobiography." The perils, leaving aside the vulgar possibility that one might commit libel, amount to a single peril: that the writer will be understood to be insanely self-concerned. "He has written", said the presenter of the radio programme *Start the Week*, "four books about himself." Actually, it was then eight books: but I could bear the halving of my production more easily than the insinuation that here, my goodness, we had an egotist of a particularly insufferable kind. Small wonder that such a man specialised in maligning his family. His poor wife. And children, if such a man managed to have any. Etcetera.

HAVING PROPOSED a defence and justification, I should perhaps say a little about what, as it seems to me, is the art of it. The fact that a life may feed many books appears to astonish reviewers, but I wonder if it astonishes anyone else. In contemplating my mother's existence, at a moment in great old age when she was living in the 1970s but in fact was concerned much of the time with what, for her, were still unconcluded scenes that had occurred in the 1890s and 1900s, I was struck by the thought that life is a three-volume novel written hastily on the back of a postcard. I might have said: a multitudinous-volumed autobiography. What I do myself is to take a period of life: make notes from my diaries of that period: add large pinches of simplifying memory: stir: beat (as it said on an Italian tin of soup we once bought) to ebullience: and discover . . . what the general taste turns out to be. Title accordingly.

With the book I am now struggling with, or groping for, the title and general theme, and the atmosphere I hope it might have, came early. I found the title when standing on one of the platforms in the Holborn tube station. There was an advertisement for stockings: fit you, it claimed, like a second skin. That was it, *A Second Skin*. Because what, I knew, the book would be about, in a general way, was that period in life when you grow a second skin: not in order to become thick-skinned, but in order to be thin-skinned in greater comfort. I write scores of sketches, and they tell me in greater detail what the book is about. They create connections between themselves. They draw a story out of the chaos of veritable things. They thrive especially on the discovery of coincidence and echo.

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Well, as to coincidence: who of us is not ruthlessly subject to it? Not long ago I was invited to lecture in the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. At exactly the same time, for precisely the same week, a cousin of mine, with the same uncommon surname, was invited to lecture at the next-door University of Victoria. I came from London, he from Toronto. *Coincidence No. 1.* We got together at the weekend and on the Sunday afternoon were strolling up one of Vancouver's main streets, Georgia West, when there was a cry of "Hi!", and it was yet another Blishen. My cousin hadn't seen her for fifteen years, I hadn't seen her for nearly a quarter of a century. *Coincidence No. 2.* The possibility of three Blishens whose homes are far apart meeting on Georgia West in Vancouver on a Sunday or any other afternoon must be infinitesimal. I seem to live in the midst of infinitesimal possibilities realised. I suspect we all do. In that dance to the music of time, we're constantly encountering the same figures: once they were making a yo-yo appear monstrously tiny, now they're making a dog appear monstrously tiny, but they're the same figures. And many of the stories into which life falls are pinned together by coincidence: and if in autobiography we invent a few of these, we are only providing in moderation and with taste what life does not scruple to provide in a vulgarly lavish fashion. There is no untruth in it, for we are imitating one of life's own commonest devices.

What is more—and here, I think, as an attempt to convey the character of a life, the authentic memoir falls down—we all live in a dimension that is not wholly present, nor wholly past, nor wholly of the future: but a confusion of them all. (In his last book Günter Grass calls this what is translated as the pas-presenture.) We live among echoes. The room of life rings with them. What holds a novel together is coincidence and echo, and often a kind of circularity, and these are what holds actual lives together.

In the book I'm feeling for at the moment I see three characters, all dead, all connected, all examples of the failure of institutions to help natural gifts to realise themselves: all disappointed men: all physically destroyed by some disconnection, or failure of assembly, buried deep in their nerves and veins. In one, a leak in the brain; in another, a misprint in the matter out of which he has been put together; in the third, a maverick item among all the items out of which he was composed. All of them, as it happened, had married women who, out of their own sense of disappointment, and deep feeling of having been unrealised, had adopted powerful irrational philosophies, and had written their men out of the centre of their lives before they'd begun physically to die. All this happened. It will be remembered that Goya wrote these words under so many of those drawings of his that he called "The Disasters of the War": *This happened. I saw this.* Of course, every earnest writer, and every writer concerned with whatever success to render life truthfully, writes (in terms however remote from actual happenings) of what happened: what he saw. But I hope I speak for a curious corner of the world of writers that includes diarists and not perfectly comfortable autobiographers like myself.

Lately I've been reading Pepys again and finding in him what his latest editor, Robert Latham, described when I was interviewing him for a BBC programme as a matter partly of wanting to live, and then to live again: to have it twice. Partly, I think, it was a matter of some passion for digging the story out of the confusion of events in which one is submerged.

The standard idea is that life is a contemptible storyteller and the writer has to force the sprawling ineptitude of it into shapes—and shapes. Life has no sense of climax or ironic juxtaposition: it constantly fails to produce the right twist at the right turn of events, and so on. I don't feel that at all, and believe the little literary cohort I speak for doesn't feel it, either. I find life is only too embarrassingly ready with its offer of stories. The problem is to keep up with them. The diarist, who may become the autobiographer, is someone obsessed with the notion of being immersed in *raw story.*

Read Pepys—remember the difficulty of discovering the shape of the day you are writing about, this very day that's ending—and admire the natural, excited skill with which Pepys always finds that shape. Among the pleasures given by his diary is the kind that's provided only by the exercise of art. But in the keeping of a diary there is already an artistic intention. The diarist runs alongside the story that is partly that of his own life but is also the stories of other lives that happen to be within his view. He is taken with the essential artistic aim of marking out the shapes of those stories.

I catch myself engaged in an attempt to compliment myself under the guise of complimenting Samuel Pepys. But there it is! I think he must be a sort of patron saint (distinctly unsaintly) of those who write autobiographically. (Who include a vast number of poets. I've at times been struck as an occasionally trembling autobiographer by the immunity of poets from all threat of being sued for libel, though a poet may be more infamously candid about recognisable members of his family or friends than most prose writers.)

PERHAPS THE CHIEF PERIL of writing autobiographically is that it so easily lays the writer open to a charge of being unable to generalise or invent. It is true that those who write in this fashion have a curious need to cling to the facts of things, however moulded and transformed. But if they are dismayed by the idea of writing pure fiction, it is because they would be throwing away the essential excitement that makes it possible for them to write: which lies in the thrill of proving that what has really happened, in order to be shown with all the glow and enchantment and shapely surprise and surprising shape of a story, does not have to be wholly jettisoned, completely transformed or recreated. And I see that I may be making an absolute distinction between one kind of writer and another.

V. S. Pritchett, whose word on what it feels like to be a creator of fiction I would take in preference to that of any other living writer, has said that, for him, the story can be written only when it has been made as alien as possible from himself. Fiction clearly isn't a matter of concealment: it frees the writer, it frees the reader. I see that: and would like to be understood as acknowledging all the superiorities of fiction.

I would only say, in defence of autobiography and in this attempt to explain why anyone should embark upon the perils of writing it, that I hope that in some of its manifestations it may exhibit one or two of the freedoms, and may even achieve one or two of the ends, of fiction.

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Leopold Labedz

Will George Orwell Survive 1984?

Of Doublethink & Double-Talk, Body-Snatching & Other Silly Pranks

"When you lie, it's much to know you're lying."
GEORGE ORWELL

"It is a most encouraging thing to hear a human voice when fifty thousand gramophones are playing the same tune."
GEORGE ORWELL

"How fascinating to live long enough to meet one's own world as history, and find it barely recognisable!"
MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

"ORWELLIAN ORGY . . . Orwellian Overkill . . . the Tedium of 1984"—these are just a few descriptions of the extraordinary explosion of articles, reports, plays, conferences and books on the occasion of the advent of the Orwellian year. As Paul Johnson put it in *The Spectator* (7 January 1984):

> "The excesses of the Orwell industry became a kind of Orwellian nightmare in themselves. Big Brother, in the shape of Big Crick and other senior entrepreneurs in the industry, filled our TV screens, dominated the radio waves and overflowed the newspaper columns. . . . The Orwell industry will end by destroying Orwell's work. He has already been turned upside down and stood, as it were, on his short-back-and-sides head."

Orwell fever isn't always Big Business; sometimes it is cottage industry. The following small financial note appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* (16 November 1983):

> "Six weeks to 1984, George Orwell's definitive biographer Prof. Crick yesterday predicted a solid 12 months of commercialisation, on a scale approaching that of *Star Wars*. Everything from T-shirts to popcorn and stuffed toys are dreaded by Crick, who tells me *1984* fever is sweeping the world 'like the black plague'.
>
> Crick, however, is not allowing the Orwellian bandwagon to pass him by: 'to rip off the Yanks—or rather provide something responsible for the Americans', he is staging a five day 'George Orwell Summer School' in London at up to £180 a ticket. Included is a curious music hall show at the Players Theatre of songs 'mentioned in Orwell's work'.
>
> This follows a tour of 20 *1984* conferences in America, starting in January, where I trust Crick's hosts will be more receptive than those in Brussels last weekend, *Les Amis de Science Fiction et Fantasie*. He tells me few of the 'freaks' turned up because they considered *1984* neither fiction nor fantasy."

Reading the unending stream of commentaries on Orwell and "his" year, it is indeed obvious that, more often than not, he has been misunderstood and generally trivialised, and his insights wilfully distorted. Irving Kristol rightly remarked in *The Wall Street Journal* (19 December 1983) that

> "George Orwell must be slowly spinning in his grave. Throughout the Western world a substantial segment of the media and academia is gearing to 'appreciate' his ideas in ways that would have confirmed his worst apprehensions."

LEOPOLD LABEDZ, *editor of "Survey" magazine in London, is a Fellow of the Institute of International Studies at the London School of Economics. Born in 1920, he was educated in Warsaw and at the Universities of Paris, Bologna, and London. After returning to Warsaw on holiday in the summer of 1939, he spent three years under Soviet rule after the annexation of Eastern Poland by the Soviet Union. In 1942 he joined the Polish Army and served in Italy and the Middle East under British command.*

He has edited "Revisionism" (1961), "Literature and Revolution" (1963), "The Sino-Soviet Rift" (1964), "International Communism after Khrushchev" (1965), "On Trial: The Case of Sinyavsky and Daniel" (1967) and "Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record" (1972). Among his previous contributions to ENCOUNTER *are "The Spectre of Yalta" (December 1981), "Chomsky Revisited" (July 1980), and "False Dilemmas, Real Alternatives" (December 1980).*

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What happened to Orwell can be precisely described as the application to himself of the mechanism of Orwellian inversion of meaning. Like Winston Smith, he became its innocent victim. More than that: not only have his perceptions been corrupted and perverted, but he has been adopted by some of the very people whose mentality and attitudes he despised most.

How did this operation, this Orwellian lobotomy on Orwell, come about?

Once upon a time (i.e. when Orwell was still alive) things were "normal." Orwell, democrat and libertarian, would criticise Communism and the "progressive" intelligentsia. *The Daily Worker* would castigate him as a reactionary servant of imperialism, as its "running dog." The fellow-travellers considered him unclean; the editor of the *New Statesman*, Kingsley Martin, disapproved of him, and Orwell in turn despised Kingsley Martin.

> "Once when he and I were lunching at a favourite Greek restaurant of his in Percy Street [Malcolm Muggeridge recalls], suddenly out of the blue he asked me to change places with him, which I of course agreed to do. He explained that the reason he wanted to change places was that from where he had been sitting, he found himself looking straight at Kingsley Martin lunching at a nearby table. The spectacle of so corrupt a face, he said, would assuredly spoil his luncheon. . . ."
>
> (*Sunday Telegraph*, 18 December 1983)

As for attitudes to Orwell, they were clear-cut: from the Stalinist *Pravda* which described him as "a lackey of the bourgeoisie", to the "anti-Stalinist" Isaac Deutscher who described Orwell as "a fanatic" sowing the seeds of McCarthyism, and *1984* as the "ideological super-weapon in the cold war."

With the passing of time things became more complicated. The "era of the cult of personality" (an Orwellism if ever there was one) was denounced by Khrushchev, causing disarray among Western pro-Soviet men of the Left. While Stalin's victims were being "rehabilitated" in the Soviet Union (in an Orwellian way), Orwell, by then long since dead, was beginning to be "reassessed" by "progressives." Their appropriation and expropriation of Orwell began. He was by now already being called "a great teacher" in the *New Statesman* itself.

It seemed to presage a great puzzlement, and at that time (in *Survey*, October 1968) I referred to the "Orwellisation" of Orwell:

> "How would George Orwell regard the general consensus which his writings evoke today? What would he think about some of his recent admirers? How would he view the present scene if he were alive?
>
> There is no doubt, as *Time* magazine pointed out, that 'today he would be equally unpopular.' In his time he was made into a political pariah by the 'progressive' *bien-pensants* for his lucid exposition of their cant and their 'smelly little orthodoxies'. Now, reading the reviews of *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* makes one realise that, like so many others before him, he is safely on the way to emasculation through canonisation (the actual ceremony will take place in 1984). Particularly striking is the change in the ostensible attitude towards him of the same 'progressive' *bien-pensants* whose type of mentality he despised most and who displayed such marked antipathy towards him in the past. They snubbed him then, they embrace him now.
>
> In fact, to entertain the idea that Orwell would have been pleased with the 'progressive' intelligentsia of today would require a double 'doublethink'. The elderly subjects of Orwell's scorn are still with us: his unmasking of the humbug of the pacifist and fellow-travelling Old Left has not prevented the passing-on of some of its mental attitudes to the younger generation. Its shibboleths and pieties have crept into the spirit of the age. One has only to contrast the refreshing, cant-proof individual style of Orwell with the thoughtless imitativeness, the sanctimonious 'revolutionary' clichés, and the stereotyped 'nonconformism' of the New Left.
>
> Twenty-eight years ago (in 1940) Orwell wrote: 'The thing that frightens me about the modern intelligentsia is their inability to see that human society must be based on common decency, whatever the political and economic forms may be.' In 1948 he wrote in his essay *Writers and Leviathan:* 'Obviously, for about fifteen years past, the dominant orthodoxy, especially among the young, has been Left. The key words are: progressive, democratic and revolutionary, while the labels which you must at all costs avoid having gummed upon you are bourgeois, reactionary and Fascist.'"

What has changed? How, and why?

1. *The Case of Raymond Williams, or Going Doublethink One Better*

IN THE 1970s the "recovery" of Orwell by the "progressives" advanced substantially. Raymond Williams published a book on Orwell in the Fontana *Modern Masters* series (1970) in which he "reinterpreted" Orwell in a way which actually made him a precursor of the New Left. This ideological surgery was performed by using very selective quotations and leaving aside what was obviously essential in the evolution of Orwell's thought. According to Raymond Williams, Orwell's "anticipations of *1984* are primarily responses to fascism." He contends that "long after his controversies with what he saw as the official lying of the Communist press, it was still fascism that he saw as the totalitarian danger. . . ." The sophistry of this "reinterpretation" consists in avoiding Orwell's preoccupation with the concept of totalitarianism which led him (unlike Raymond Williams) to see not only the historical differences between Nazism and Communism, but also the real similarities between

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the two. Williams' pious diagnosis of Orwell as "a complex man" even manages to exclude some of his most characteristic concerns—for example the tendency of the "progressive" intelligentsia to be single-minded while holding fast to incompatible ideas: to doublethink. This, of course, is more than understandable since Raymond Williams belongs to the species himself.

On one split level of thought Raymond Williams must know perfectly well that after the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945 it was *not* "still fascism that [Orwell] saw as a totalitarian danger", but Communism, and that the novel *1984* is *not* "primarily a response to fascism." Elsewhere in his book, he says so himself; but evidently he has a deep need to explain away the main thrust of *Animal Farm* and of *1984*. He attempts to dilute Orwell's concern with Communism and criticises him at the same time for "cutting out the spring of hope" by creating in the novel "the conditions for defeat and despair . . . the revival of the Socialist movement, which [Orwell] said he wanted, is met by the sad ghost of his late imagination." At one point Williams admits that "in understanding his last work . . . the key element . . . was the substitution of Communism for fascism as the totalitarian threat", and thus explicitly contradicts himself.

He even concedes that "there is a clear line, certainly, from Orwell's *Inside the Whale* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to an orthodox North Atlantic mood"; but he also confers "Orwell's effective inheritance" on the New Left which "respected Orwell directly, especially in its early years." What happened, then, in later years? Down the memory hole?

Williams points out Orwell's contradictions, but why does he curiously refuse to look at "these different tendencies" as part of Orwell's political evolution? He admits that "there are phases of Orwell's development"—but this obvious observation is given a very special twist:

> "Evidence for each of the positions can be drawn from each of the periods, though of course with differences of emphasis."

This turns into a remarkable exercise in sophistry in which one stresses only what it is convenient to emphasise. In order to protect the faith from doubts and doubters, Williams looks at Orwell not as shedding various illusions over time, but as maintaining contradictory positions, only "with differences of emphasis."

Thus, even before the likeness of Orwell was officially made into a wax figure in Madame Tussaud's gallery, Williams exhibits him as being permanently fixed in a state of doublethink ("the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them"). This ideological "one-upmanship", amounting to "treblethink", is given a spurious air of ideological detachment:

> "It would be easy but pointless to start a quarrel over Orwell's inheritance: body snatching or mantle snatching. . . . Instead of flattening out contradictions by choosing this or that tendency as the 'real Orwell', or fragmenting them by separating this or that period or this or that genre, we ought to say that it is the paradoxes which are finally significant."

One can almost sympathise with Raymond Williams' difficulty. Unlike him, Orwell was not "a true believer"; he had the audacity to learn from experience. His intellectual history is the history of his gradual emancipation from the fog of "progressive" attitudes and stereotypes, although he died before he had quite shed them all.

ORWELL WAS NEVER a Communist, but his evolution was not dissimilar to that of the prominent ex-Communists of the era: Boris Souvarine, Ignazio Silone, Franz Borkenau, Manès Sperber, Arthur Koestler, Bertram D. Wolfe. In his short life he moved from the mental horizons of a Kingsley Martin *milieu* to the intellectual world of a Koestler (who was similarly ostracised by "progressive" circles).

Williams regrets that "in [Orwell's] criticism of people who went on holding or who came to hold positions identical or close to his own between 1937 and 1939, there is some lively polemic, but also a good deal of rancour or random abuse." He does not seem to want to understand the basic reason why Orwell, having gone through the "lively" ideological historical experience of the late 1930s, abandoned these positions, and nowhere does he quote or refer to a basic conclusion of "the real Orwell":

> "The sin of nearly all left-wingers from 1933 onward is that they have wanted to be anti-fascist without being anti-totalitarian."

For the lesson Orwell learned on his return from Catalonia was that the defence of political liberties had to be consistent, alert to tyrannous militant tendencies on both Left and Right; that freedom was indivisible, and that false friends behind the lines could purge you as quickly as open enemies on the front.

Orwell was a Left-winger, but he always resolutely rejected Communism and I have little doubt that, were he alive, he would be branded today as "a vulgar anti-Communist" and, even worse, "a cold warrior." His political opposition to Communism was firmly based on ethical grounds: he insisted that "all people who are morally sound have known since about 1931 that the Russian régime stinks." Intellectually, Communism was for him "a form of Socialism that makes mental honesty impossible."

He made his position particularly clear in his attack on W. H. Auden's notorious notion of "the necessary murder" (in *Inside the Whale*, 1940):

> "Personally I would not speak so lightly of murder. It so happens that I have seen the bodies of numbers of murdered men—I don't mean killed in battle, I mean murdered. Therefore I have some conception of what murder means—the terror, the hatred, the howling relatives, the post-mortems, the blood, the smells. To me, murder is something to be avoided. So it is to any ordinary person. The Hitlers and Stalins find murder necessary, but they don't advertise their callousness, and they don't speak of it as murder; it is 'liquidation', 'elimination' or some such soothing phrase. . . . The huge tribe known as 'the right Left people' found it easy to condone the purge-and-*OGPU*

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side of the Russian régime and the horrors of the first Five-Year Plan."

Intellectually, Orwell was no less emphatic in his condemnation of Communist practices and of those who justify them:

> "Fifteen years ago, when one defended the freedom of the intellect, one had to defend it against Conservatives, against Catholics, and to some extent—for they were not of great importance in England—against Fascists. Today one has to defend it against Communists and 'fellow-travellers.' One ought not to exaggerate the direct influence of the small English Communist Party, but there can be no question about the poisonous effect of the Russian *mythos* on English intellectual life. Because of it, known facts are suppressed and distorted to such an extent as to make it doubtful whether a true history of our times can ever be written.
>
> Let me give just one instance out of the hundreds that could be cited. When Germany collapsed, it was found that very large numbers of Soviet Russians—mostly, no doubt, from non-political motives—had changed sides and were fighting for the Germans. Also, a small but not negligible proportion of the Russian prisoners and Displaced Persons refused to go back to the U.S.S.R., and some of them, at least, were repatriated against their will. These facts, known to many journalists on the spot, went almost unmentioned in the British press, while at the same time russophile publicists in England continued to justify the purges and deportation of 1936-8 by claiming that the U.S.S.R. 'had no quislings'. The fog of lies and misinformation that surrounds such subjects as the Ukraine famine, the Spanish Civil War, Russian policy in Poland, and so forth, is not due entirely to conscious dishonesty, but any writer or journalist who is fully sympathetic to the U.S.S.R.—sympathetic, that is, in the way the Russians themselves would want him to be—does have to acquiesce in deliberate falsification on important issues. . . ."
>
> (*Collected Essays*, Vol. 4, pp. 84–85)

2. *Orwell & the "right Left people"*

NOT THAT George Orwell was always that consistent. But, unlike other men of the Left, his intellectual integrity impelled him not to indulge in tortuous rationalisations, to face refractory realities, to call a spade a spade, rather than engage in the usual face- and faith-saving euphemisms and semantic acrobatics. In the process, "the crystal spirit" which Orwell invoked early on (in a short poem written in 1939) clarified his own mind and those of many other people. Inevitably, this entailed eliminating various contradictory beliefs of his own. Between 1937 and 1939 Orwell was, no doubt about it, involved in a bit of "doublethink" himself.

The best example is perhaps his attitude in the late 1930s to the international question of War and Foreign Policy. In the period between his return from Spain and the outbreak of World War II, Orwell belonged to both the pacifist Peace Pledge Union and the ILP (the splintered Independent Labour Party) which advocated "a revolutionary war." At a time when the official Labour Party was advocating "resistance to the dictators" but opposing rearmament, he expressed the following ideas:

31 July 1937: "It is evident that people can be deceived by the anti-Fascist stuff exactly as they were deceived by the gallant little Belgium stuff, and when war comes they will walk straight into it. I don't, however, agree with the pacifist attitude. . . . I still think that one must fight for Socialism against Fascism. I mean fight physically with weapons. . . ."

28 August 1937: "War against a foreign country only happens when the moneyed classes think they are going to profit from it. . . . Every war when it comes, or before it comes, is represented not as war but as an act of self-defence against a homicidal maniac ('militarist' Germany in 1914, 'Fascist' Germany next year or the year after). The essential job is to get people to recognise war propaganda when they see it, especially when it is disguised as peace propaganda."

15 September 1937: "Everyone with any imagination can foresee that Fascism, not of course called Fascism, will be imposed on us as soon as the war starts. . . . If one collaborates with a capitalist-imperialist government in a struggle 'against Fascism', i.e. against rival imperialism, one is simply letting Fascism in by the back door."

5 February 1938: "If someone drops a bomb on your mother, go and drop two bombs on his mother. The only apparent alternatives are to smash dwelling houses to powder, blow out human entrails and burn holes in children with lumps of thermite, or to be enslaved by people who are oddly more ready to do these things than you are yourself; as yet no one has suggested a practicable way out."

26 May 1938: "Pacifism is so far from being fashionable, or acceptable to the possessing class, that all the big daily newspapers unite to boycott all news of pacifist activities. . . . Meanwhile there is considerable possibility of producing an effective anti-war movement in England. It is a question of mobilizing the dislike of war that undoubtedly exists in ordinary decent people, as opposed to the hack journalists and the pansy left."

12 October 1938: "The policy of simultaneously shouting for a war policy and pretending to denounce conscription, rearmament etc. is utter nonsense and the general public aren't such bloody fools as not to see it."

4 January 1939: ". . . that Britain and France ought to have gone to war [to defend the Czechs]. . . I don't believe to be true."

ONCE THE WAR STARTED, however, Orwell cleared his mind.

10 January 1940: "It seems to me that now we are in this bloody war we have got to win it and I would like to lend a hand."

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8 June 1940: "Since 1934 I have known war between England and Germany was coming, and since 1936 I have known it with complete certainty. I could feel it in my belly, and the chatter of the pacifists on the one hand and of the Popular Front people who pretended to fear that Britain was preparing for war against Russia on the other, never deceived me."

12 July 1942: "In so far as it takes effect at all, pacifist propaganda can only be effective *against* those countries where a certain amount of freedom of speech is still permitted; in other words it is helpful to totalitarianism. . . . Despotic governments can stand 'moral force' till the cows come home; what they fear is physical force."

This is not exactly a tale full of consistency. But it shows Orwell's characteristic evolution. His common sense told him, increasingly, as his subsequent positions demonstrated, to abandon confused ideological clichés cherished by the Left and make responsible choices by looking steadily at realities in the light of experience.

THE PATH ORWELL TRAVERSED can be gauged by one dramatic comparison. Here is what he said in his article "Why I Joined the Independent Labour Party", in *The New Leader* (24 June 1938):

> "We know the terrible temptation of the present moment—the temptation to fling every principle overboard in order to prepare for an imperialist war. . . . I believe that the ILP is the only party which, as a party, is likely to take the right line against imperialist war or against Fascism when this appears in its British form . . . the only party I could join with at least the certainty that I would never be led up the garden path in the name of capitalist democracy."

And here is what Orwell said in his "Notes on Nationalism" (*Polemic*, No. 1, October 1945):

> "There is a minority of intellectual pacifists whose real though unadmitted motive appears to be hatred of western democracy and admiration for totalitarianism. Pacifist propaganda usually boils down to saying that one side is as bad as the other, but if one looks closely at the writings of the younger intellectual pacifists, one finds that they do not by any means express impartial disapproval but are directed almost entirely against Britain and the United States. Moreover they do not as a rule condemn violence as such, but only violence used in the defence of the western countries. The Russians, unlike the British, are not blamed for defending themselves by warlike means. . . ."

It is not surprising that Raymond Williams does not dwell on such points; but fudging them is not always possible. The deep, ill-concealed hostility to "the real Orwell" often surfaces in ideological censure. Having earlier praised Orwell as "a generous, inquiring, truthful man", Williams then charges him with having made "an accommodation to capitalism"; and wearily concludes that "the thing to do with his work, his history, is to read it, not imitate it."

In an additional chapter, "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1984", recently written for the new edition of his book (1984), Williams condemned what he calls "the use and abuse of the novel during the cold war." He also reproached Orwell for the "error" of excluding from the novel "the national liberation and revolutionary movements of what he knew as the colonial world." In his article in the Communist *Morning Star* (3 January 1984)[1] he made his point even more explicit, arguing in tortuous prose that the fact that Orwell's vision

> "has been at least partly verified . . . including within Socialism and the labour movement, cannot outweigh the more important cancellation of all significant political struggles and hopes.
>
> But this was the cancellation that was steadily worked for, in the period from the Cold War—the (Communist) God that failed—through the propagation of the End of Ideology to the so-called New Philosophers who see the struggle for freedom as opening the door to tyranny."

It is not difficult to see the cat slipping out of the bag. Williams' attitude here is, unmistakably, the very opposite of Orwell's. Sidney Hook once wrote ironically about people "who always tried to keep in delicate balance their appreciation of both totalitarianism and democracy." Williams clearly tips even this "delicate balance." But after all, he comes to praise Orwell, not to bury him.

In his book Williams displays a kind of fearful symmetrism, so characteristic of the "progressive" intelligentsia.[2] Almost all his examples of Orwellisms, from "doublethink" through "*Newspeak*" to "the memory hole", refer to what he sees as their manifestations in the West, while references to Soviet and Communist practices are shrouded in "delicate" obfuscation. The crime of the Western "oligarchy" resides in

> "identifying as public enemies, in its newspapers, dissenting political figures: not the 'proper official Opposition', but the 'unofficial' Reds, Wreckers, Extremists who in good *1984* style are seen as either mad or guilty of 'thoughtcrime'."

By contrast, Williams' comments on Communist practices are full of polite, cautious restraint. He writes about "socialist order which under long historical pressures had become authoritarian." He magnanimously admits—*quelle finesse de sentiments*!—that "reservations could be made about the nature of Soviet communism", but refers to its all-embracing falsehoods as "official simplifications." He sedulously avoids mentioning the crimes: the omnipresent systematic lying from the Moscow Trials to the nasty little war in Afghanistan; the Gulag slave-labour camps, the psychiatric prisons; the persecution of writers, artists, religious and national minorities; the subjection of countries to satellite status; the ugly militarisation of society combined with hypocritical "peace" propaganda; and all the rest of the temporary deviations from shining ideals for the radiant future. His rare references to such

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[1] Excerpts from Raymond Williams' chapter on "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1984" appeared simultaneously in the "Euro-Communist" *Marxism Today* (January 1984), which is at loggerheads with the pro-Soviet *Morning Star*.

[2] Koestler described this form of *trahison des clercs* as follows:

> "It showed a forgiving attitude towards totalitarian terror, but denounced with unforgiving venom any failing or injustice in the West" (*The Yogi and the Commissar*, 1945).

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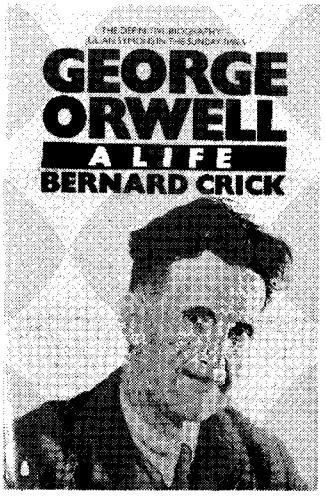
unpleasantnesses are indirect and euphemistic: he certainly is no follower of unflinching Orwellian realism when it comes to *Soviet* affairs.[3] The net result is a complete travesty of Orwell in this pathetic attempt at "reinterpretation."

3. Emasculation through Canonisation



ALTHOUGH THE "OFFICIAL" biography of Orwell by Bernard Crick (Secker & Warburg 1980)[4] does not suffer from the same excesses as the Williams book, it has also contributed to the misinterpretation of Orwell and to his false "new image." It is certainly a more solid and professional piece of work; but Crick's "progressive" mentality is so different from Orwell's that he had somehow to rationalise the divergence of his attitudes from those of his subject, who was the scourge of the *bien pensants* of his day. He accordingly invented the concept of "empathetic fallacy" in order to refashion his "hero." The end result is rather more subtle than in the case of Williams' "reinterpretation", but is none the less problematical. Edward Crankshaw rightly pointed out in his *Times Literary Supplement* review (26 December 1980) that while Orwell's life history is conscientiously recorded and extolled, Crick's Orwell is devoid of all his essential human characteristics.

> "Because Professor Crick is so bent on avoiding what he calls the 'empathetic fallacy', he has devised a method of exposition, a sort of laboratory demonstrator's method, unfit for application to any organism more complex than a newt. . . . There is no shape, no light, no shade. . . . Above all what is lacking from beginning to end of this book is life and warmth."

Still, many reviewers "approved" the biography, and not a few were highly complimentary.[5] The book certainly helped to prepare the ground for subsequent attempts at the "Orwellisation" of Orwell.

It was when 1984 itself was approaching that the "emasculation through canonisation" of Orwell finally occurred. This is not, of course, to say that there weren't many highly perceptive and intelligent articles and essays on Orwell, but many were so thoroughly misconceived that the public was left with an even greater disorientation than before. Or, as General Jaruzelski's *Trybuna Ludu* (28–29 January 1984) put it:

> "For over 30 years the anti-Communist propagandists tried in every way to identify Orwell's novel (*1984*) with the reality of the USSR and other socialist countries. Today, however, this is not so easy for them as at the height of the Cold War. In 1984 the arch-conservative politicians, the spokesmen of Big Capital and the anti-Communist crusaders in the USA have to conduct polemics with the opinions of other well-known Americans—the activists for Human Rights, Racial Equality, and Peace who are comparing the realities of the United States with the Orwellian vision of '*Big Brother is Watching You*.' Similar voices were widespread in West Germany, Great Britain, and the Scandinavian countries."

If one disregards the Orwellian character of this passage, its second part refers to something that has actually happened, and indeed reached an astonishing degree of intensity. The "widespread voices" not only confused the great issues and Orwell's attitude to them, their scale and persistence testified to a serious decline of common sense and sense of proportion in the West. They ranged from muddled assertions that *1984* was aimed both at the (totalitarian) East and at the (democratic) West to the brazen relocation of Orwell's target: not the USSR but the USA. The spectrum of this "reinterpretation" of Orwell ranged from, say, the minimum of 2 + 2 = 4½ to the maximum of 2 + 2 = 5. The final—lunatic—touch to this Pirandellesque situation was the triumphal reclamation of Orwell by the Soviet press.

AMERICAN WRITERS WERE NOT without their own surrealistic touches. In the US symposium *1984 Revisited* (edited by Irving Howe), Marc Crispin Miller proclaimed that "we should not read *1984* as a bitter allegory on the evils of Stalinism", since the novel is really concerned with the horrors of Consumer Society:

> "Under the influence of television, the consumer is

[3] Without invoking the "economic interpretation", one might say that Williams has invested too much in Utopia to be able to renounce it emotionally after its bankruptcy has become intellectually obvious. As the reviewer of his latest book, *Towards 2000* (1983), remarked in *The London Review of Books* (2-15 February 1984): "Williams does not know where to stand: the book is the tragedy of a man who can't any longer make up his mind."

[4] Bernard Crick expressed his thanks to "the late Mrs Sonia Orwell who in 1972 granted me unrestricted access to all of George Orwell's papers", but he stressed that "in no sense is this an official biography." What he did not mention in his "Acknowledgements" was the fact—revealed by Julian Symons—that, having invited Bernard Crick to write Orwell's biography, Sonia Orwell (for reasons which are not made explicit) "later tried vainly to retract" the invitation (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 27 January 1984). Afterwards Crick disclosed that Sonia Orwell was "breathing down my neck with a deadline on a contract which would have removed my absolute right to quote and say what I pleased—a deadline that by the end she was hoping, almost predictably, I would not meet" (*The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 20 April 1984).

[5] Julian Symons even called it (in *The Sunday Times*, 23 November 1980) "the definitive biography", which it most definitely is not. Nigel Dennis was more discerning (in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 November 1980): "Orwell asked that no biography be written of him—an impossible request, considering the importance of his life. But he may have envisaged falling into the hands of a writer like Professor Crick . . . a fate worse than death."

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> intended to end up gasping wide-eyed and open-mouthed at his advertising supplements and video-screens, turned just as infantile as those Party members at the end of the Two Minutes Hate, with their 'deep, slow, rhythmical chant of B-B! . . . B-B! . . . B-B! . . .'"

Another contributor to Professor Howe's symposium, Bernard Avishai, produced a no less profound reflection:

> "Who can read Orwell's account of Oceania's violent and pornographic telecasts without thinking about American crime shows, the soaps, the Big Events and the commercials that interrupt them?"

In his special two-hour TV programme on *1984* (also shown on BBC 1), Walter Cronkite, the famous American newscaster, did not even mention the phenomenon of Communism. Instead, he used the internment of the American Japanese during World War II as an example of government by "Big Brother." Like so many others, he presented *1984* today as a problem of the threat to freedom by technology — computers, lie-detectors, and all that—as if Orwell was concerned with inanimate robots in a science fiction and not with flesh-and-blood villains wielding totalitarian power. For Orwell the problem was the technology of power rather than the power of technology.

This dehydrated view of politics—it is, naturally, the favourite of the popular press and media, so drawn to the "telescreen"—could not be further from Orwell's view. He knew that it is people who move machines, not the other way round; and he saw the threat not in the wickedness of robots, those bloodless technical vampires, but primarily in the danger of political totalitarianism to the individual and to civil society. Big Brother is not a Dalek and *1984* is not science-fiction.

There was little in Orwell's early background (Eton, the Raj in Burma, down-and-out in Paris) to provide him with a key to the understanding of totalitarianism, but anybody with personal experience of it is amazed by his uncanny intuitive powers. Contemporary writings, those of Franz Borkenau and others, helped intellectually, but imaginatively he understood the wider picture from being acquainted with British "progressives" (and their "doublethink") and with the Communist terror in Catalonia. His personal familiarity with "censorship in Britain"—so often invoked to distort and blur his message by suggesting that his discomfiting BBC and publishing experiences were somehow relevant to his *1984* vision—nearly always involved his anti-Communist writings, whether he was censored "from below" (Kingsley Martin, Victor Gollancz, T. S. Eliot) or "from above" (in the "Good Uncle Joe" period during World War II). To pretend that Orwell's message is not basically rooted in his revulsion against Communist and pro-Communist practices is to shred the evidence and doctor the tapes. He repeatedly complained about being hampered by editors and publishers, referring to "the kind of censorship under which we are now suffering and of which the Left Book Club is a symptom."

Erich Fromm, in his preface to the 1961 New American Library edition of *1984*, declared that "it would be most unfortunate if the reader smugly interpreted *1984* as another description of Stalinist barbarism, and if he does not see that it means us, too." (Walter Cronkite's "*Afterword*" to the 1983 edition repeats this theme.)

IN HIS BIOGRAPHY Bernard Crick rejected what he severely called "the ENCOUNTER view of Orwell"[6] and those critics who "saw the satire as applicable only to the Soviets, and their sympathisers, and not also to the Western way of life." With the Orwellian year looming ahead, Crick tried to deflate with pinprick after penprick all who did not share this view. In particular, he criticised Conor Cruise O'Brien for saying (in *The Observer*, 18 December 1983) that *1984*

> ". . . is about . . . something which can only be Communism as it developed in the Soviet Union. . . . Where, as often, a parallel with a particular system suggests itself, it is always a parallel with the Soviet system, under Stalin. Big Brother's familiar style . . . is Stalin's unmistakable style. . . . The Party is a Communist party, not a Nazi one. . . . The forced labour camps described are of Communist, not Nazi type. And so on, it is all of a piece. The brilliant inventions of *Newspeak* and *Doublethink* are Orwellian extrapolations of Soviet practice, not of any other."

When Conor Cruise O'Brien, referring to Crick's assertions, ironically exclaimed that "If *1984* is even partially any kind of satire on our Western way of life, I'm a Chinaman", Crick replied (*Financial Times*, 31 December 1983):

> "O'Brien is a Chinaman. His anti-Communism is myopic (therefore not likely to be effective). . . . To deny that [*1984*] satirizes ourselves as well as the Russians is simply to distance it, to see only the mote in the other's eye and not the beam in our own. Orwell was expert in seeing double."

Crick is obviously not very expert in seeing single. Unable to provide a reasoned reply to O'Brien's point, he offered incoherent double-talk. The "progressive" intelligentsia which Orwell came to despise still cannot live without their portion of "doublethink"; but why do they have to dabble in this particular subject, get excited about it, tie themselves into knots about it? Orwell obviously got under their skin, not just at the time but now and, perhaps, forever. With their symmetrism they still *prefer* to see "the beam" in our eyes rather than "the mote" in Soviet eyes.

BERNARD CRICK REFERRED to O'Brien again, if in some hectic ethnic confusion, in an article in *Tribune* (6 January 1984):

> "If it was a satire of conditions in the West, [O'Brien] said,

[6] Among the critics who published articles on Orwell in ENCOUNTER were Rayner Heppenstall ("A Blurred Portrait", February–March 1981), Dennis J. O'Keeffe and James McNamara ("Waiting for 1984", December 1982), and John Wain ("Orwell & the Intelligentsia" and "Koestler & Orwell on the Totalitarian Mind", December 1968 and September–October 1983). In his Introduction (p. 107) to *1984* Bernard Crick actually refers quite favourably to John Wain's essays on Orwell, which suggests that his allegations about "the ENCOUNTER view of Orwell" are perhaps only *minitrue*. . . .

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> I'm a Dutchman. That explains a lot. But a bit much for everyone's favourite bull-in-a-china-shop to miss even the significance of Orwell giving Winston's Thought Police torturer the name of O'Brien."

The mind boggles. Is, then, O'Brien a Dutchman in a China shop or a Chinaman talking double-Dutch? Such careless shooting-from-the-hip is characteristic of Crick, and so, as Nigel Dennis (true enough, a former ENCOUNTER editor) noticed, is the quality of his style, puerility being its essential hallmark. The Crick biography of Orwell provides a number of examples of both.

Giving the impression that Orwell somehow became his personal property, and with single-minded obsessiveness, Crick was double-quick in accusing all and sundry—"the radical Right" in his *Tribune* article, *The Times* in his letter-to-the-editor (6 January 1983)—of "body-snatching" Orwell. In *The Financial Times* he wrote:

> "Body-snatchers from almost all points of the political compass descend on the long-dead Orwell: only the Communists remain consistent in rejecting him completely."

In this he could not be more mistaken.

As it happens, while Bernard Crick, Raymond Williams, and other Left forward-lookers were doing their best to "reinterpret" *1984* by refocusing its message, the Italian Communists were carrying out their own analogous operation on Orwell, published as a special supplement to *l'Unità* (18 December 1983). The leader of the PCI, Enrico Berlinguer, criticised Orwell's "false prophecies", and went on to reject firmly the idea that in *1984* "the great English humanist" intended to depict the USSR and Stalin. This was simply an invention of "cold warriors" who wanted to manipulate the novel for their own nefarious propaganda purposes (an argument not unfamiliar to the readers of Williams, Crick, and the British Communists).

4. *Up from the Memory Hole*

ALL THESE HALF-HEARTED "reinterpretations" pale into insignificance in comparison with the bold stroke performed by the Soviet press, which simply declared that *1984* is solely about . . . England and America. This clearly put Moscow one up on the Western "progressives." Orwell, at first vilified and made into an "unperson", has now been uplifted from the "memory hole." His books have not, to be sure, been published in the Soviet Union, nor are copies of foreign editions allowed into the country. On the contrary, Soviet dissidents found in possession of *1984* (like Gunnars Astra and Valery Senderov in 1983) were sentenced to twelve years' "deprivation of liberty." (Senderov, who distributed it, even received an additional five years' imprisonment on the basis of a new law which allows the Gulag camp directors to extend sentences arbitrarily.) Yet in a peculiar way George Orwell has been, if not exactly "rehabilitated", at least resurrected or reclaimed.

Operation "Rehab" began last year when *Foreign Literature* and *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published the first Soviet articles to suggest that the novel actually pertains to the West. A number of other articles followed quickly (in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Moscow News*, *Novoe Vremya*, and *Izvestiya*). The last two published very long texts with detailed argumentation about some aspects of the work.

According to *Novoe Vremya* (1 January 1984), Orwell recognised "the falsehoods of bourgeois democracy" which extinguishes and "vaporises" the individual. The anti-Communists have been trying "to fit the tight suit of totalitarianism tailored by Orwell to the body of really-existing-socialism; but in fact it is just the right cut for capitalism. . . ." The author of the article, Victor Tsopi, argued that the book was quite misunderstood. It was intended only as an anticipation by Orwell of what lay ahead for the capitalist West:

> "This novel is a grim warning precisely to bourgeois society, bourgeois civilization, bourgeois democracy in which, as he feared, the poisonous roots of anti-humanism, all-devouring militarism and oppression have today thrust up truly monstrous shoots. . . ."

Tsopi stressed that Orwell had been a member of the militant ILP and had fought in Spain against Franco, thus intimating that he was a sympathetic "progressive" figure, although "it would be an exaggeration to suggest that he was a convinced adherent of the Communist outlook." Even so Orwell had correctly anticipated the rule of "Big Brother"—who is none other than Ronald Reagan applying Orwellian policies in the USA of 1984, to which *Moscow News* added with humour that "Reagan invests the slogan '*Ignorance is Strength*' with his own literal meaning." While *Komsomolskaya Pravda* noticed that Orwell's view of totalitarian controls "is acutely in line with present-day Britain", *Izvestiya* (15 & 16 January) devoted two articles by its American correspondent Melor Sturua[7] to pointing out that they are no less applicable to present-day America:

> "Every year from 1949 to 1984 has shown, more and more palpably and persuasively, that Orwell, unintentionally and without being aware of it (though perhaps that is questionable), painted not a caricature of Socialism and Communism, but a fully realistic picture of contemporary Capitalism-Imperialism. The subject of Orwell's gloomy fantasy became the reality of the Western world, and primarily of the United States of America, which is a genuine and not an imaginary centre of evil in our time. . . ."

The cover of the New Year issue of the *New Statesman* (16-23

[7] His first name, "Melor", is fashionably (lingering Bolshevik modishness) made up from the initials of Marx, Engels, Lenin, October Revolution.

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December 1983) carried the same inverted perception. It presented Orwell looking at a party in Room 101 where Margaret Thatcher stands with Ronald Reagan, the Queen, Michael Heseltine ("Ministry of Peace") and others, under the inscription "Despite Everything Doubleplusgood 1984 to All Our Readers."

A word here, although there is very little new to say, about the *New Statesman*. Just as at the time of *Homage to Catalonia* (1944) the *Statesman* did not want to see Stalin for what he was, so in 1983–84 it did not want to see Andropov for what he was. Instead, with the usual ideological self-indulgence, it preferred to see Ronald Reagan (and Margaret Thatcher) as "Big Brother" (and "Big Sister"). The only difference is that now it does not censor the subject but puts Orwell on the front page.

The "progressive" mentality evidently changes precious little with the change of generations. The past is an unchanging scenario of progressive good opposed to reactionary evil, heroes of the future versus villains who are all yesterday's men. The real drama of the present, its new twists and tragic turns, leaves them unmoved. The Bourbons of the Left have learnt nothing since 1917, and appear to have forgotten everything between Chernavin ("I Speak for the Silent") and Chernenko (who silences those who speak). Why do they prefer to put a Khrushchev (with his *Secret Report*) or a Solzhenitsyn (with his *Gulag Archipelago*) at least half-way down the "memory hole"? What drives them to apply the same characteristic selective indignation and double standards to current East and West afflictions as they always did in the past? Is it so intellectually difficult or ethically problematic to establish as obvious that in 1984 Winston Smith would in the USSR be sent to a psychiatric prison or a labour camp for "slandering the Soviet state"—while in the USA he would be able to read and write as he pleased? I suspect he would even be able to get hold of Emmanuel Goldstein's famous secret treatise about Oceania, with the support of the *Washington Post*, by invoking the US "Freedom of Information" Act.

Like the poor, will the "progressives" always be with us? Although the word has a special meaning in our time, historically, the concept derives from the 18th-century belief in inevitable amelioration which dominated the Western mind from Condorcet, Paine and Jefferson until the beginning of the 20th century, when J. B. Bury analysed "the idea of progress" in a book which became its epitaph. The First World War undermined the belief in history as an upward escalator, the Second gave it a *coup de grâce*. From then on the belief was retained only by those sects who were committed to the idea of "the historical inevitability of socialism." The horrors of the 20th century even led many socialists to abandon this deterministic version of their faith, but they continued to divide mankind into "progressives" on the Left and "reactionaries" on the Right.

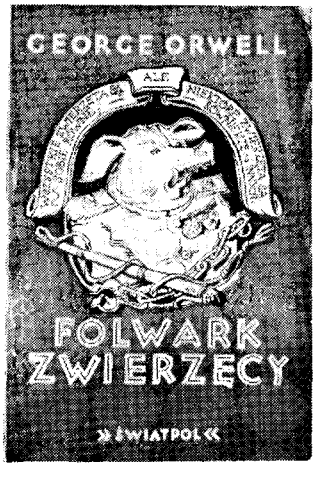
The Communists have their own version of the concept: it covers the entire spectrum of their friends, ranging from ideological sympathisers to those whom Lenin called "deaf -mutes" and who were later renamed "useful idiots." When Stalin was alive, he was always described as "the Leader of All Progressive Humanity." Once dead, he may have been pushed down a "memory hole", but in the Soviet vocabulary the word "progressive" continued to be used even more frequently. International usage increasingly resembled Soviet usage. I am using the word in the same sense in which the "progressives" use it, and to make this clear I apply inverted commas to it (Raymond Aron used for the same purpose the French word *sinistrisme*).

The Orwell celebrations provided many manifestations of the "progressives' " evergreen conventional wisdom. Perhaps the archetypal example is the much-decorated veteran of a thousand struggles between Progress and Reaction: James Cameron, writing in *The Guardian* (3 January 1984), proclaimed:

> "Let me denounce the year, the book, the image, the cliché 1984 . . . George Orwell was a great and good man, and also shrewd enough to die soon thereafter [i.e. after 1948], so that 1984 would haunt us, not him.
>
> I always thought that his prophesy was rather mild anyway. Big Brother was more daunting but less boring than Small Sister, and I believe I would rather be bullied by a brute than patronised by a prig."

Such perverse choices have a long history on the Left. Another worldly-wise "progressive", G. D. H. Cole (Bernard Crick depicts him as being in the same political lineage as Orwell), put it somewhat differently in 1942: "much better be ruled by Stalin than by a pack of half-witted and half-hearted Social Democrats. . . ."[8] He would prefer that, would he? As Orwell said: "One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that, no ordinary man could be such a fool."

5. *Ex Oriente Lux*



WHO CAN BE listened to on the subject today? Not the twisters who just can't bear to concede a point which Orwell himself insisted upon a dozen times; and certainly not the Soviet "Rehab" corps. I recommend the East European dissidents, the "Winston Smiths" who survived Stalin's brainwashings and post-Stalin "rehabilitations", and who are talking to us with the chastened voice of historical experience. None of them is on record as preferring to be bullied by a brute than patronised by a prig. They know where Big Brother has his headquarters.

Thus the fate of Orwell's last book is perhaps best gauged by the juxtaposition of the reaction to it by "progressive" commentators in the West and by unofficial commentators in

[8] The Fabian Society pamphlet *100 Years of Fabian Socialism, 1884–1984* (March 1984) has the following reference: "The Coles understood the danger of totalitarianism, kept clear of the Communist Party without ever being anti-Communist. . . ."

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the East. Among those in the Communist countries who happen to have read it, it is difficult to find any who fail to be struck by its perceptiveness and its painful relevance to their own life. In Stalin's time, Czeslaw Milosz (the future Nobel Prize winner) wrote that Orwell's Party readers "are amazed that a writer who never lived in Russia should have so keen a perception of its life", an observation Crick himself quotes. This year, a Czech sociologist, Milan Simecka, writes in the Introduction to the *samizdat* edition of *1984*:

> "When I read the story of Winston Smith, I received a shock, because all of a sudden I realised that this was my own story I was reading. . . . Those living in Eastern Europe, and especially those who were born here and who have lived through all the 'victories' and defeats of real socialism, are struck, when reading *1984*, by many astounding similarities. . . . The similarity to our everyday life comes as a physical shock, neither pleasant nor amusing. The prophetic accuracy of the book arouses in us feelings that are difficult to describe . . . a numbing sense of *déjà vu*. . . . I have grown up in a world of forbidden books, a world of omnipresent indoctrination, where the past was being rewritten all the time. . . . Can you wonder, given all this, that Winston Smith came to seem to me like my own brother?" (*Index on Censorship*, February 1984)

It is not so difficult for Czechoslovaks to "imagine a boot stamping on a human face" after their experience between 1948 and 1984 and the military suppression of all hopes for "socialism with a human face."

In Poland during the *Solidarity* period (1980–81), an "underground" publisher (Miroslaw Chojecki, now an exile in Paris) organised—with official permission—a book exhibition in Warsaw which included "illegally" published works, and among them Orwell's *1984*. Since General Jaruzelski's *coup*, Polish underground publications again frequently refer to Orwell, whose influence can also be seen in the fact that some of his phrases have found their way into everyday Polish language, just as they did into English. There is even a scholarly book, published in *samizdat* in 1982 (under the imprint of the University in Cracow), entitled *Newspeak* and devoted to the "Orwellisation" of the Polish language. As the editors explain, the work is based on the proceedings of a scholarly conference held at the University in January 1981, when (as they say) "truth was being restored to words."

> "To the organisers of the conference the question of language seemed to be one of the most important elements in the social ferment, in the struggle to achieve a decent basis for our everyday life, and in a right to live in a reality which is not falsified and constantly redefined, in which language has been transformed into an instrument for enslavement instead of being an instrument serving human communication."

Adam Michnik took up the same theme:

> "I believe that a dispute about language has been the central element of Polish intellectual life for the last 35 years. It concerns our ability to defend reality and to communicate with each other. In that period a great many people have lost the ability to communicate because of the language foisted upon them."

The most succinct formulation of the problem was by Stanislaw J. Lec: "Does surrealism cease to be surrealism if it becomes reality?"[9] This goes to the heart of the matter—which has been precisely described by Leszek Kolakowski (*Trialogue*, December 1983):

> "The intolerable aspect of Sovietism is the open mendacity of public language. The adjective 'open' needs to be stressed here. The point is not that the official verbiage is full of lies, but that its ostensible content is not really supposed to have semantic value in the first place; it belongs to a realm of reality which has little to do with daily life or daily speech; its function is not to inform but always to order, to regulate human behaviour, to threaten, to encourage, to forbid, etc. People who have properly assimilated the usage of 'Newspeak' are not even expected to believe that it is conveying something that might be true or false in the normal sense: they are expected to behave according to the rulers' wishes. The language of politics in the Western world may of course be infected with lies, be hypocritical, stupid, or brutal; it still remains a language with a normal function. The language of Sovietism has changed ontologically, as it were: it has become an element of the practical execution of power and has nearly lost other functions; it has become as a-semantic as music. . . ."

The genius of Orwell was best manifested in his having imaginatively understood and conveyed this, although the people on the Left whom he tried to instruct are still completely missing the point.

In its fatherland the use of "*Newspeak*" is as pervasive as ever. As usual, the recent "elections" (99.9% in favour) to the Supreme Soviet were described by headlines like The Reality of Our Democracy (*Izvestiya*, 31 January 1984). A report in *Izvestiya* (25 February 1984) of the meeting of similar "parliamentary representatives" from Communist countries held in Hanoi was entitled The Noble Mission of Parliamentarians (they also regularly attend the meetings of the "Inter-Parliamentary" Union. . .). The horrors of "the capitalist world" are depicted with familiar and routinised deceitfulness. One example among myriad instances of the continuing use of the Orwellian "reversal" technique is an article on the US media in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (29 February

[9] An article entitled "Ignorance is Strength" (in the underground publication *Promienisci*, November 1983) describes, in Orwellian terminology, official propaganda under Jaruzelski. Another *samizdat* publication, *Solidarity Information* (Mazowsze Region, No. 159), discloses under the title "Orwell Reborn" the confidential Party instruction to the press which is quite similar to the secret recommendations by the Control Office for the media contained in the famous *Black Book on Censorship* published in *samizdat* in 1977. Cf. my articles in *The Times* (26 and 27 September 1977) and *The Washington Post* (6 November 1977).

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1984): GENOCIDE THROUGH CENSORSHIP. Orwell explained it presciently when he wrote that "if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought", and he made this point (in 1946) with reference to totalitarian "cultures":

> "I should expect to find—this is a guess which I have not sufficient knowledge to verify—that the German, Russian and Italian languages have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship."

In Italy and West Germany, the blighted languages, sturdy plants that they are, have recovered their normal character in democratic and open societies. In Communist states Orwell's insight has been confirmed. The only exception was Yugoslavia, where a translation of *1984* was officially permitted to be published (by BIGZ Publications).

BUT THIS IS A REMINDER THAT "*Newspeak*" did not start with Stalin. It was Lenin who spoke first about the necessity of "conquering the language", even if it reached its totalitarian zenith under Stalin. The ideological codification of "*Newspeak*" continues, and its vocabulary is constantly adapted and applied to new circumstances (Shi'ites in Iran are no longer "progressive", those in Lebanon still are; pacifist Christians are "progressive", Lebanese Christians are not, etc.). Current usage is organised and dictated by ideological instruments of the Party; as Alain Besançon has remarked: in totalitarian logocracies, power is exercised "at the tip of the tongue." Soviet linguists confirm this Orwellian perspective:

> "The great task of the mass media in socialist society is to develop and bring to perfection the consciousness of its members in the desired direction."

Orwell pointed out that the function of "*Newspeak*" was to try to render impossible any other mode of thinking.

He also knew that it was not limited to Communist countries—it is, quite voluntarily, embraced in non-Communist countries. The same Soviet linguists stress that "certain traits inherent in the socialist language can also be found in the progressive press of the capitalist world."[10]

Orwell described it pithily in "Politics and the English Language" (1946).

> "People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic labour camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. . . . The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting ink."

The phraseology continues to flourish, the cuttlefish are still squirting.

Indeed, the infiltration of "*Newspeak*" into democratic countries, and the adoption of some of its aspects by the media, is probably the most glaring yet the least noticed contemporary phenomenon. One of the few who do refer to it, Richard Pipes, writes in his new book, *Survival is Not Enough*:

> "The vocabulary of East-West relations, shared by Western 'liberals' and the Soviet apparatus, serves the same purpose as the official jargon inside the Soviet Union. It focuses the discussion on matters which are desired but often do not exist, and places out of bounds subjects which exist but are deemed best unmentioned. It perverts one's perception of phenomena by attaching to them pejorative words when they are considered inimical, and positive ones when they are useful. . . . Because 'Communism' evokes negative images in the West, it has been gradually supplanted with 'socialism'. For some time now, Moscow has been calling its bloc the 'socialist camp', and this usage, too, has spread to Western media. . . . 'Liberal' journalists have not only assimilated much of this vocabulary but introduced refinements of their own, which are promptly borrowed by Moscow. They routinely call someone critical of the Soviet Union a 'hard-line anti-Communist', but never refer to anyone as a 'soft-line pro-Communist', even though every adjective demands its opposite. An 'extremist', when applied to a person's views on the Soviet Union, invariably means an anti-Communist, a pro-Soviet 'extremist' being unknown to journalism: the latter is a 'moderate'.
>
> Linguistic manipulation causes mental confusion and as such it is extremely dangerous. It enables Soviet political strategists to dominate the intellectual climate of East-West relations and to insinuate themselves into Western political discussions. It allows them to project false identities of interest between the two systems and to incite internecine conflicts of opinion as well as of interest within the Western community. It blurs the line between fiction and reality. . . ."

WHILE IN EASTERN EUROPE there is a demotic linguistic resistance to "*Newspeak*", in the West the "Finlandisation" of language is perceptibly progressing. The mainline Western media allowed the "progressives" to capture the word "Peace", and now they can safely use the Soviet ideological concept of "Peaceful Coexistence" as a substitute. In the 1940s and '50s, the term

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[10] *Language in the Developed Socialist Society, A Symposium by the Academy of Science* (Moscow, 1982), pp. 15, 88.

In his review of *1984* in *Partisan Review* (July 1949), Philip Rahv (of whom Crick is critical in his biography of Orwell in his Introduction to *1984*) wrote:

> "Now what is 'double-think', actually, if not the technique continuously practised by the Communists and their liberal collaborators, dupes and apologists. Nor is it a technique available exclusively to Soviet citizens. Right here in New York any issue of the *Daily Worker* or of *The Daily Compass* will provide you with illustrations of it as vicious and ludicrous as any you will come across in Orwell's story. . . ."

Crick wrote that, "unfortunately, Rahv's reading of Orwell proved very influential: the right accepted it and many of the left reacted against Orwell because of the popularity of this well-meant but most partial and crude reading."

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"Cold War" was generally understood as the Soviet method of political warfare; now its derivative, "Cold Warriors", is a term of abuse applied to those who advocate resistance to the Soviet Union and not appeasement. Examples can, alas, be multiplied, in the unthinking acceptance of the stereotypes which increasingly pollute our language. The term *Newspeak* is more and more applied only to Western usages. A *Dictionary of Newspeak* (compiled by Jonathon Green) has been published recently, and it is concerned with Western jargon, not with the Communist perversions of language. The same applies to the *Quarterly Journal of Doublespeak* edited by William Lutz of Rutgers University's English department. The *Morning Star* now calls Britain "Airstrip One", and is certain that "Big Brother is alive and well in the US."

What Western journalists and broadcasters, statesmen and diplomats often seem not to realise is that the climate of opinion created by the confusing use, if not adoption, of Soviet terms and their frequent acceptance at face value considerably undermines the Western position. This not only disarms the West politically, but because of it even the negotiations with the Soviet Union are "loaded against the West." The encroachments on our languages cripple the Western case by smuggling Soviet premises into the very framework of the debate. At the time of Yalta the expression "Soviet democracy" was not considered oxymoronic; now it is "peaceful coexistence" which is taken at face value. Obviously the attempts to reverse Orwell's message are part of a wider process of meaning-reversal which is affecting the whole of the West.

THIS APPLIES NOT ONLY to the present but also to the past: "who controls the past, controls the future." Raymond Williams, obsessed with his fearful symmetrism, provides an undifferentiated and equidistant amalgam of Soviet and Western historical writing. Looking "beyond [the] differences of systems", he takes up

> ". . . . the point [which] bears most closely on the notorious 'memory hole'. For if there is one thing that has not proved necessary in manipulating majority opinion, it is systematically rewriting the past. On the contrary, the past in itself becomes a kind of memory hole, from which only a few scholars and researchers bother to uncover and recover the facts. Why were the first atom bombs dropped on Japan *after* its government had proposed the outline of peace? What really happened in the Gulf of Tonkin? Which way and during what peace negotiations was the *General Belgrano* sailing? These are questions (none, in their whole context, with very simple answers) which with a thousand of others, from the role of Trotsky in the Russian Revolution to the policy of Mao and the Red Guards in China, are still intensely inquired into by small minorities, while the dominant public stance, in one social order after another, is to go blithely on with the news of the day, leaving the past to the obsessive and to the dry-as-dust. . . ."

Is this a case of "ignorance is strength", or of weakness through ignorance? To identify Western controversies on contemporary history with systematic Soviet rewriting of history is a casuistic amalgam. In the 1960s and '70s, American "revisionist" historians—a spectrum which ranged from the old William Appleton Williams to his younger New Left pupils—worked hard to put the blame on the West for the onset of the "Cold War." They lost the debate, I think, although, notably enough, it was conducted with open arguments and references to authentic historical sources. Footnotes were the weapons, not Gulag camps. But the symmetrical imperative calls for putting Western patterns of historical controversy on a par with the sub-standard Soviet practices of historical falsification.

THE BASIC DIFFERENCES between the Soviet and Western historiography are as clear as they are deep. Michel Heller has remarked:[11]

> "Soviet citizens under 25 may know who Assurbanipal is (they've heard of him from school), but not who Khrushchev was: the name of the former First Secretary of the Central Committee and Prime Minister has been completely eliminated from newspapers, text-books, and historical monographs. Lack of memory, for the historian too, becomes a virtue in socialist countries. In certain conditions it is even a guarantee of security. It is easier to predict the future than the past.
>
> The permanent transformation of the past makes lies absolutely necessary. It turns deceit into a fundamental element of ideology. George Orwell, first in the West to have understood the essence of the Soviet system, remarked that 'organised lying is something integral to totalitarianism', and he forecast that 'it would continue even if concentration camps and secret police forces ceased to be necessary.' 'The really frightening thing about totalitarianism', wrote Orwell, 'is not that it commits "atrocities", but that it attacks the concept of objective truth.' . . ."

All this will be amply illustrated in a comparison of successive editions of the Soviet Party history and *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (of which the seventh and the third editions were respectively published and completed this year). These are the institutional monuments to Soviet historiographical "vaporisation." For those who, unlike Soviet citizens, have access to previous editions they provide an observation point on the Soviet "memory hole."

Since the scrapping of the celebrated Stalinist bible, *The Short Course of Party History* (1939), Khrushchev and Brezhnev managed to denounce their predecessors in their own textbooks of Party history. For whatever reasons, Andropov did not succeed in doing this before he died, and only time will tell whether Chernenko will have sufficient power and time to obliterate the memory of his old rival. But, although the falsifications are somewhat less blatant today,

[11] Michel Heller, "History as Contraband" in *Survey* (No. 2, 1982). Cf. also *Contemporary History in the Soviet Mirror* (1964), ed. John Keep; Leopold Labedz, "Rehabilitation and Perdition" in *Problems of Communism* (No. 2, 1963); J. P. Shapiro, "Soviet Historiography and the Moscow Trials" in *Russian Review* (No. 1, 1968); A. P. van Gondoever, *Angst voor het verleden* (*Fear of the Past*, Utrecht, 1983).

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they remain the same in principle: Soviet historiography is still contemporary politics projected into the past. The fact that it is now conducted in a more sophisticated way does not basically change its Orwellian character. The Moscow Trials are still non-existent, and so is the "secret protocol" of the Stalin-Hitler Pact. A counterfeit history does not cease to be counterfeit if additional details are provided, just as a false banknote does not become legal currency if the counterfeiter's techniques improve.

IT IS REVEALING that those who refuse to recognise the difference in principle between Soviet and Western history-writing and prefer to apply the metaphor of the Orwellian "memory hole" to both, are so oblivious to the misdemeanours of their own comrades. One example among many is particularly relevant to the story of the "re-interpretation" of Orwell.

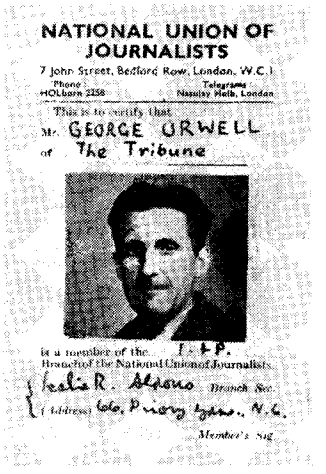
Writing in *Tribune* (6 January 1984) about *1984*, Bernard Crick asserted that Orwell was "a pretty typical *Tribune* socialist, in other words of the kind of young Michael Foot and the middle-aged Aneurin Bevan." Was Crick being serious, or merely blinkered? Orwell was certainly *not* a "typical" *Tribune* socialist. As a "fervent anti-Communist" (Crick's own description) Orwell wrote his *Tribune* column, "As I Please", in a way which was very untypical of the rest of the paper.

Early in 1948, Orwell wrote an open letter to *Tribune* about their persistent differences. It is reproduced in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters* (Vol. 4, pp. 449–455), but is not referred to by Crick. (In his biography he only quotes, strangely enough, Orwell's congratulatory remark from his piece published in *Tribune* on its tenth anniversary.) In his letter "In Defence of Comrade Zilliacus" (which was *not* published), Orwell wrote that *Tribune* was

> "sitting on the fence, uttering contradictory slogans and getting nowhere. . . . *Tribune* has consistently, over a period of years, failed to make its position clear. He [Zilliacus] knows that the only big political questions today are: for Russia—against Russia, for America—against America, for democracy—against democracy. . . . To be anti-American nowadays is to shout with the mob . . . to speak favourably of America, to recall that the Americans helped us in 1940 when the Russians were supplying the Germans with oil and setting on their Communist Parties to sabotage the war effort, is to be branded as a 'reactionary'. And I suspect that when *Tribune* joins in the chorus it is more from fear of this label than from genuine conviction.
>
> Surely, if one is going to write about foreign policy at all, there is one question that should be answered plainly. It is: 'If you *had* to choose between Russia and America, which would you choose?' It will not do to give the usual quibbling answer, 'I refuse to choose'. In the end the choice may be forced upon us. . . . And in spite of all the fashionable chatter of the moment, everyone knows in his heart that we should choose America."

One looks in vain in Crick or Williams for this clear-cut reflection of Orwell's political attitude in the last period of his life, the years when he wrote *1984*.

6. *Orwell and the "Tribune" Legend*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WHAT OF *Tribune* itself? It too has consigned such recollections to a "memory hole" (together with other reminiscences of its political past). With the advent of the Orwellian year, *Tribune* tried to squeeze the last ounce of glory from its association with Orwell. On 30 December 1983, it reproduced his "As I Please" column of 2 February 1945; and in early 1984, for several weeks, it printed a number of articles on *1984* by "commentators of both Left and Right." This was an unusual display of editorial tolerance, since *Tribune* would not normally touch certain writers of the Right (such as Alfred Sherman or Peregrine Worsthorne) with a barge-pole. Somehow this was supposed to imply that today's *Tribune* has a special claim on Orwell, and its aim was "to provide some perspective."

Curiously enough, the first article in the series (by Bernard Crick) was printed alongside an excerpt from a book by the late Wilfred Burchett, the Communist propagandist famous for his "reports" on alleged US "bacteriological warfare" in Korea. This in itself was an indication of how far the sensitivities of *Tribune* are from Orwell's own. But it is really the whole history of *Tribune* that "provides some perspective" on the question of Orwell in 1984. It is, I am convinced, fair to say that during the 47 years of its existence its editorial line, with all its vicissitudes, never once coincided with Orwell's own attitude to such problems as Communism, the Soviet Union, and foreign policy, even—as his unpublished letter quoted above testifies—at the time he was writing for it. For most of the time, and in particular in its pre-War period (and especially so at present), *Tribune* was and is in striking contrast to Orwell's own position.

Before World War II *Tribune* advocated a "Popular Front" with the Communists. (Orwell was against it.) Its editorial of 25 August 1939 was a classic of fellow-travellerish political obtuseness, an immortal boob in the annals of quotable nonsense:

> "A pact of non-aggression between Russia and Germany, if it is signed, will be a great reinforcement for peace in Eastern Europe. At the same time it is a lie to suggest that it leaves Germany a free hand against Poland or anyone else."

On 1 September 1939, the day Hitler attacked Poland, *Tribune* was unlucky enough to publish another editorial still stressing that "the non-aggression pact signed by Stalin with Hitler had strongly reinforced the power for peace in Europe." In an article called "Stalin—Architect for Peace" it reiterated that "only malicious or ignorant commentators could pretend that the Soviet-German Pact is an arrangement to give Germany a free hand in Europe." This "contemptible lie" was also

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criticised by Konni Zilliacus (Orwell later castigated him as a "crypto-Communist"):

> "Let us dismiss the tales of a secret Nazi-Soviet alliance for the partition of Poland."

During World War II *Tribune* changed its position. Orwell was a shade naive about this when he wrote, after the War, that "*Tribune*'s anti-Americanism is not sincere but is an attempt to keep in with fashionable opinion. . . ." This surely was wishful thinking on his part: in fact, the continuity of the Left was reasserting itself. If he were alive in 1984 he would see that *Tribune* has almost come full circle during the post-War period, moving from the initial "*Keep Left*" to its present "hard Left" position.

It was, to be sure, not possible simply to return to the fellow-travellerish position in the 1930s. Too much embarrassing Soviet dirt had come to the surface in between to make this politically respectable. For the same reason, the two anniversary anthologies of selected *Tribune* writings published in book form (*Tribune 21* and *Tribune 40*) carefully omitted embarrassing pre-War texts such as those quoted above. But on its 45th anniversary *Tribune* came close to an apologia for its stand in the 1930s. In an editorial (1 January 1982) reviewing its own history, it censured the pro-rearmament stand of its opponents before the outbreak of the war with Hitler:

> "Governments, industrialists and financiers were clamouring for rearmament—reviving the spectre of war. . . . *Tribune* attacked the Government's pro-Franco indifference to the Republican plight in Spain. It attacked the plunge towards another war in which the working man would be called upon to die to make the world safe for capitalism."

Oblivious to any inconsistency, the editorial continued:

> "When war was declared in September 1939, *Tribune* flung itself into its own contribution to the struggle against fascism, underlining the duties of all socialists within that struggle."

Readers were kindly spared the telling details of what actually happened; but the post-War *Tribune* position which Orwell had criticised was now (in 1982) criticised in the *Tribune* editorial . . . from the very opposite standpoint:

> "As the cold war grew more glacial . . . the paper tended then to over-react from the rejection of Stalinist communism into what seemed to be a fervent pro-American position—so that at first, it could even make supporting noises over American ("United Nations") intervention in Korea. . . . The leanings towards America diminished sharply, later, when the full reality of Dulles's anti-communist crusade emerged."

IN THAT SAME ISSUE, as I have noted, Orwell's column on the tenth anniversary of *Tribune* was reproduced, but to avoid telling the whole truth about its schizoid past, *Tribune* omitted the first paragraph, which contained the following passage:

> "*Tribune* in its short life has been two distinct papers, if not three, and my own contacts with it have varied sharply, starting off, if I remember rightly, with a rap on the knuckles."

It also omitted a passage (italicised below) from another paragraph:

> "With the outbreak of war [*Tribune*'s] circulation had taken a severe knock, because the Communists and near-Communists who had been among its warmest supporters now refused to help in distributing it. *Some of them went on writing for it, however, and the futile controversy between 'supporters' and 'opposers' of the war continued to rumble in its columns while the German armies gathered for the spring offensives.*"

Tribune's claim was that its "views of the Stalin dictatorship" were justified "by the Khrushchev revelations." This scarcely amounted to an adequate description of *Tribune*'s ambiguities; in any case, the "revelations" merely led it to become (like many other papers of the "radical left") not anti-Soviet, but more anti-American. They may have been frustrated Utopians, but they remained "true believers." They found in a shrill anti-Americanism a compensatory factor for their inability to extol "the country with a Hope and a Plan."

This was the very opposite of Orwell's own evolution. The contrasts and contradictions made it necessary for the "progressives" to suppress into their subconscious, or to drop into a "memory hole," all those embarrassing elements of their past. Recollection might undermine their present political positions. Looking at 1984 with "some perspective", it is obvious why *Tribune* was so concerned. *Tribune* is clearly not in "the Orwell tradition", yet claims him for its own: a strange case of "Orwellians" tiptoeing around the skeletons still rattling in the closet—the skeletons of Stalin and . . . Orwell.

The concluding sections of Leopold Labedz's article will be published in the next issue.

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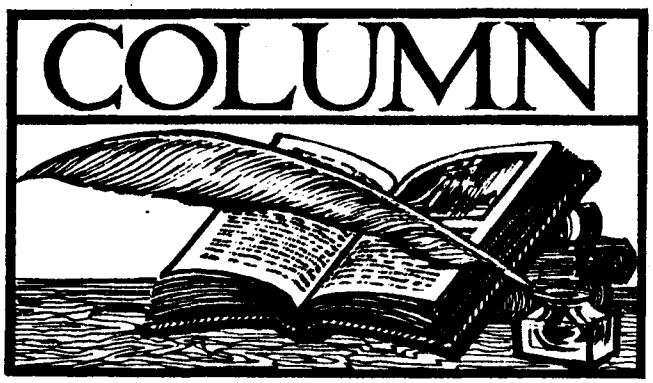

FILM PRESS SHOWS are peculiar affairs. At one recent screening, Mel Brooks appeared on stage and threatened to visit—"in your home"—any critic who panned his remake of *To Be or Not To Be*. That could have been fun; but no one I knew saw a sinister limousine snaking up the drive. In any case, critics are in a minority at previews: most of the spectators seem to be fans, company flacks, production hangers-on, and friends or relatives of the crew. It's they, I imagine, who sometimes applaud the final credits, as if saluting a curtain call. Then everyone streams out, blinking guiltily in the daylight. Seeing movies in the morning still smacks of sin.

The feeling's heightened when they're kitsch. Coming out of some strenuous Central-European enigma, some hectoring protest film, or the seventeenth screen version of *Carmen*, I can just about brave the baleful looks of people who work for a living. *Et in acedia ego*. But after *Greystoke*, subtitled *The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes*, nearly everyone had a furtive air.

It's seventy years since Edgar Rice Burroughs, that jack-of-all-trades from Chicago who never set foot in Africa, produced his down-market version of Kipling's Mowgli and Rousseau's noble savage. They in turn had affinities with Romulus and Remus; but Tarzan, brought up by apes in the jungle, was the nobbiest Roman of them all. He wasn't simply a semi-feral Superman: he was also Lord Greystoke, heir to untold acres and a golden fortune to set off his blue blood. For suburban children everywhere, this was a double bonanza. In leafy back-gardens all over the civilised world, we made creepers out of clothes-lines and swung from the lower branches of ornamental trees. We pummelled our pale chests and yodelled the well-known war-cry. Then it was time for dinner, and we turned back into members of the landed aristocracy.

IN THE BOOKS, and in previous films, Tarzan used to puzzle me slightly. He was always clean—and clean-shaven; he wore a modest loin-cloth; he didn't move much like a monkey. *Greystoke* responds to these qualms. Here, Tarzan is often dirty, and is taught to shave—though he looks beardless already; in early scenes, he's naked; and he capers about like Hop-frog. In other ways, too, the movie takes itself more seriously than the Johnny Weissmuller series. Its jungle scenes are bloodthirsty, recalling Hobbes rather than Rousseau. It parallels the still powerful opening of the very first *Tarzan* book. It has some affecting scenes with the late Sir Ralph Richardson. Its ape-skinned human actors look wonderfully simian—except for their long legs. And although quite a lot of the film is funnier than it means to be, the nonsense doesn't quite invalidate the multiple appeal of the myth.

Primitivism and snobbery are only part of it. Some of the most ludicrous scenes show Victorian explorers stumping about amid tropical ferns in Pinewood Studios, attacked by "natives" who probably have day jobs with British Rail. Tarzan's stately home, compounded of Floors Castle, Blenheim Palace, and Hatfield House, is a baronial dream for nostalgic and decadent Europeans. But even these establish the needed counterpoint—between Nature and over-nurture, between jungle cries and the yelps of the Scottish reel. And, corny as it mostly is—"You've shot my father" as a dead ape crashes out of a tree—the film will surely suggest to most viewers that humans have more in common with other animals than some of our behaviour would suggest. For example, we eat them.

WHICH BRINGS ME TO George Orwell. The onset of 1984 brought a glut of Orwelliana: reprints, exhibitions, stage adaptations, television films—one of them using his own words read in a slovenly, non-Orwellian voice. He might have disliked some of the celebrants, from band-waggoning Right-wingers to the dreariest of Leftists. He knew how the ideal of brotherhood could be tarnished by its devotees. "We have reached a stage", he wrote in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "when the very word 'Socialism' calls up, on the one hand, a picture of aeroplanes, tractors, and huge glittering factories of glass and concrete; on the other, a picture of vegetarians with wilting beards, of Bolshevik commissars (half gangster, half gramophone), or earnest ladies in sandals, shock-headed Marxists chewing poly-syllables, escaped Quakers, birth-control fanatics, and Labour Party backstairs-crawlers." Earlier in the same polemic he declared: "One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words 'Socialism' and 'Communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist, and feminist in England."

I quote these scatter-gun sentences, not to discredit Orwell if you happen to be on the hit list, but to suggest how much times have changed since 1937. In a famous piece for *Tribune* written nine years later—"Decline of the English Murder"—Orwell evoked a proletarian epiphany:

> "It is Sunday afternoon, preferably before the war. The wife is already asleep in the armchair, and the children have been sent out for a nice long walk. You put your feet up on the sofa, settle your spectacles on your nose, and open the *News of the World*. Roast beef and Yorkshire, or roast pork and apple sauce, followed up by suet pudding and driven home, as it were, by a cup of mahogany-brown tea, have put you in just the right mood. Your pipe is drawing sweetly, the sofa cushions are soft beneath you, the fire is well alight, the air is warm and stagnant. In these blissful circumstances, what is it that you want to read about?
>
> Naturally, about a murder. . ."

I remember such afternoons in a private "billet" as a wartime

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evacuee, and I feel as warm towards them as Orwell did. But there's just one snag for me nowadays—a nasty taste in my mouth.

It's years now since I gave up smoking. At first, like Mark Twain, I found it easy: I gave up three or four times. Never a cigarette-smoker, I switched from a pipe to cheroots; then, with the help of some arithmetic about the cost, I finally stopped. What price cigarillos when I could buy a book or cassette? A year later, at some banquet, I took a cigar. It tasted disgusting. With that, I knew I'd joined the roll-call of Orwell's cranks.

One result was to change my image of smoking. Once, cigarettes had seemed sophisticated, if not world-weary—waved in a long holder, or wagging on some witty Gallic lip. Now they looked like indoor fireworks. Reading novels of the 1930s, I seemed to be studying advertisements: "Have a cigarette"—"Turkish this side, Virginia the other"—"Has anyone got a light?" In some fat faces, cigarette-stubs resembled the stalks of rosy apples. Cigars looked wet and phallic; even pipes, formerly the symbol of rugged masculinity, seemed little more than babies' dummies.

One down, and umpteen to go. Quakers? Feminists? They, surely, no longer carry the Orwellian seal of disapproval. Pacifists probably still just qualify as eccentric; polysyllabic Marxists are acceptable, if boring, in quite a few well-kept households now. Nudists? Not in this climate, I hope. Beards? Common form. Sex-maniacs? Ditto, to judge from the advertisements. Birth-control fanatics? Why bother to be fanatical? That leaves just sandal-wearers, fruit-juice drinkers, "Nature Cure" quacks, and vegetarians. I told you times had changed.

ORWELL'S HIT LIST, of course, was inherited partly from the Chesterbelloc hearties whom he equally tended to scorn: ale-quaffers, doggerel-chanters, apologists for Merrie England and the Ages of Faith. They and he shared the plain man's suspicion of pallid, glinty-eyed prigs whose idea of a good time was to stop other people drinking or going to the theatre on the sabbath. Non-smokers still sometimes exude an aura of prim, bloodless disapproval. So do some members of the nut cutlet brigade.

I hold no brief for "Nature Cure" quacks. Somewhere, I've got a pair of summer sandals. I like fruit juice as well as, *inter alia*, iced water, milk, wine, and whisky. But when it comes to vegetarianism, I can't help wondering how Orwell might react today.

Some vegetarians are certainly repulsive. Adolf Hitler was one. Another is a sad-sack character who parades a placard round Oxford Circus in London, denouncing animal protein as a stimulant of carnal lust. "Right on!" might be a sane person's response. Then there are the self-pamperers—actors, joggers, vitamin-pill addicts, superstitiously abstemious, hoping in Orwell's 1946 estimate "to live an extra five years." Every life, I guess, has its own price/earnings ratio. For the moment, I'll settle for enjoyment.

Slightly more compelling is the case made by planetary ecologists. Hungry mouths, they claim, could be fed if we didn't waste grain by converting it into livestock. Since most experts predict famines early in the next century, humanity can hardly afford its present spendthrift ways. Yet, even so, what impact can you or I have on world food supplies? Some, perhaps: but not enough to persuade many people to give up chicken breasts, T-bone steaks, and loin of pork with crackling.

The menus offered as alternatives aren't invariably succulent. Omelettes—savoury pancakes—soufflés—cheese flans—nutty salads: these just about pass. Mung beans? *Merci*. Sludge purée? Mercy! What carnivores like is something they can bite, and crunch, and chew. They enjoy gnawing bones, savouring morsels of rare meat marbled with fat that squirts small tasty jets on to the palate. They relish the salty tang of prawns, the gentle flesh of lobster claws, the suave firmness of grilled sole. And the smell of grilled bacon for breakfast will beckon any lazybones from his bed.

I hope I've made your mouth water. Some vegetarians may find such visions as repellent as I now find the taste of a cigar. But it's humbug to pretend that meat isn't delicious—or that giving it up involves no real sacrifice. Vegetarians who claim otherwise are mistaken, or worse.

What argument, then, might convince a latter-day Orwell? For me, it's less an argument than a slowly growing uneasiness about eating our fellow-creatures. As the author of *Animal Farm*, he might I suspect have felt it too. Sentimentality? You may say so. As a boy, Orwell enjoyed field sports, and he wrote warmly about fishing. But I can imagine his producing an effective account of visiting a trout farm or a slaughterhouse.

> "Once the trout was trapped in the netting pool, it seemed to realise something was wrong. In the stream, it had basked and brooded with its fellows. Now it swam restlessly to and fro, from bank to bank, like a competitor training desperately for the big race. Evans stooped and flipped his net. The trout was caught. It thrashed and twisted, paused, then leapt again. It was trying to get out. 'Get hold of it', said Evans. After a moment, I had it in my hand, squirming and throbbing. It felt slimy and scaly at the same time. Evans picked up the wooden baton, and with a quick turn of the wrist brought it down sharp on the fish. He just missed my fingers. The blow might have broken a joint. The trout quivered, wriggled in my hand for what seemed many seconds. When it was still, there was blood round its eye. 'There's your supper, then', said Evans."

That I've experienced. A slaughterhouse I've only seen on film. But it's hard to believe that Orwell would have been unmoved by either. Would he have renounced meat-eating? I haven't: but I have an increasingly bad conscience about it.

The novelist Brigid Brophy has written eloquently about the contrast between lambs frisking in the fields and being served up with the gravy. I'm haunted by other visions: watching a calf being born, a rickety wet folding deck-chair becoming its mother's daughter; seeing a sheep endlessly licking its lamb's cold wool; looking in on the closed indoor pen where calves are herded because their mothers are milkers; gazing into the eyes of animals in their silence and dignity and slight reproach. What chatterboxes we seem, and how cruel.

So what do I do? Give up bacon, because pigs are clean and intelligent? Move down the evolutionary scale from beef, lamb, pork, and chicken, towards fish and crustacea? It seems

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anthropomorphic to care less about those of our fellow-animals who have scales and shells. Become a vegan, renouncing eggs and dairy products? Become a Buddhist, and respect even germs?

As usual, the answer's unsatisfactory. I've eaten so many animals already that I can't completely clear my conscience. What I do now is eat fewer, and with more gratitude. I can only hope that the compromise keeps me off the Orwell hit list. But I feel guiltier coming out of a butcher's gory shop than slinking away from a mid-morning film.

M

Homer's Four Quartets

Don't flush, Mr Probert-Jones, please sit up straight,
I promise Miss Duprez will receive your note in time:
green ink, Elizabethan style. First—if you'll allow—
I wish to estimate the quantity of Shakespeare in you.

Disregarding those still locked in lead-lined coffins,
lost at sea, down mine-shafts, consumed by cannibals;
—and assuming that the ashes of martyrs at the stake,
witches, sleeping babies, men warmed by the deep bowls
of their pipes; all settle on to cultivated ground—
it does not take long to to calculate that all the people
who have ever died, fill more space than that in which
they lie and move around; seep, rise, ride bare-back
on worms and puzzled voles. What makes you fidget,
Mr Probert-Jones? And since each, in his life-time,
ate a thousand times his weight: a dinosaur perhaps,
or all grey heads that plopped into the tumbrils,
it follows that we're made of people gone before.

Who doubts that Michaelangelo contained stray cells
once within the fingers of dark-skinned naked women
kneeling at a lakeside, shaping clay? Or that Newton
inherited from Archimedes; Boadicea from a small boy
crouched at the entrance to a cave, tongue protruding
as he strained to draw his father's weakest bow. Why
do you swell, Mr Probert-Jones, and beat your chest?
Your legacy from Byron—and King Kong—is only small,
at most a fraction of the finest hair on Miss Duprez;
less than the message that scowls behind your eyes.

Lie in a rowing-boat, head against the prow, and watch
the waves. The pattern scarcely changes, and little
of the water can be seen. Yet each crest, turret,
the droplets they fling to catch vermilion and ochre
from the sun, have never been before. They subside
into the sea, merge with millions of others, again
nothing but the flow. Do you hear, Mr Probert-Jones?
When you wrote to Miss Duprez, "I will clutch thee
in the bike shed when ye olde harridan stops bleating"
I wonder if you felt the me in you. And when you go
please be careful of the rusty nail behind the door.

John Latham

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Peter Porter

A Tribute to My Enemies

Apart from God I suppose I have none.
It takes some nerve to scale the heights
Of another person's privatest decorum,
I mean his hate. Better locate them,
Such hired riparians of straight reportage,
Jaundiced judges of a bootleg happiness,
In the sad intestines, losing out through age,
Opacity and alcohol.
But they would be useful,
Those enemies, to give my life a kind
Of focus. Not just besieging horrors
Scanned and sulked at in some North of England
Editorial, or subsidised experimenters
Glowering in grey-faced halls of education,
Hastening with terracotta folders to a class
Of willing Sufis—not even the towering
Yea-preachers whose laser scorn could track
Me down through all my dark of triteness
With the cry, "You, especially you, don't matter."
No, I must play creator
And make them up, these hierophants.
Invention is the mother of necessity
In the dreaming mind: fear abhors
A vacuum. Since God's on holiday
These are my shadows of impatience,
My nutrients of the future. Chiefs of Capability
Who can hold the corners of the world down,
Frogmen of the sexual swamp who have title
To all treasure, realtors, Realpolitikers,
Plainsmen with blue eyes come into town
Clutching translations of Catullus—
Would they be myself had I the courage?
I have dreamed them back so far
They are sexless, legless appetite in a mouth
Beneath a leaf waiting for the tell-tale shine
Of presence. This pad of words is just
My camouflage. I am the prototype
Of elderly animosity whose extenuation
Is to eat the works of love. I await them here,
My enemies in a thousand colours,
They will know me, I'm listening
To Bellini in the frosty dusk, the same
Performance once we heard at the Fenice
Vespering death. Music will last until
The brain has massacred its ambient creatures.

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George Szirtes

Bricklayer General

When I was very small my father used
to swing me round and round, holding my feet.
We children would demand it as a treat,
and when he stopped we rolled about confused.

This crazy flying, I think, made me see
the upside-down excitement of real flight.
He was a bricklayer, and on the site
was subject to the law of gravity.

In every sense: you cannot know that force
until you're at the bottom and pinned down
by half humanity to sink or drown.
As was the case before the war, of course.

Throughout the war my destiny was clear.
We couldn't fail. We were the undercurrent
that would become, in time, a mighty torrent
to make the small dry burgher quake with fear.

It was the time of dizziness at last
and we had won. The serious politics
would then begin with all men laying bricks
to build over the ruins of the past.

There is an ancient legend of the mason
who couldn't build a bridge until he locked
his wife into the wall. He left unblocked
a single narrow hole to set her face in.

We had to wall up people too. A pity—
but first we had to lay a firm foundation.
You cannot hope to build a better nation
without a pile of corpses in the city.

To build the world anew and upside down—
there's nothing more exciting. I, for one,
became commander of a battalion
and then a General of some renown.

Meanwhile the walls grew stronger and had risen
with all their human stuffing to some height.
One day I joked about the lack of light
and quickly was, myself, marched off to prison.

When you feel scared you know you must beware
imaginary terrors, or you bring
all into question. Once you stop the swing
you find you're choked and dangling in the air.

So with superiors remain discreet,
and if one ever offers you a spin
never refuse it, gracefully give in,
but make sure that he swings you by your feet.

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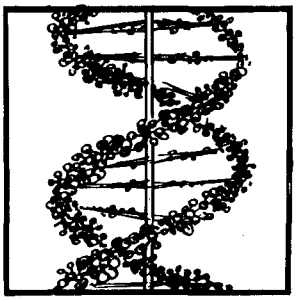
How Critical is the "Crisis" of Liberalism?

On the Self-Destruction of Freedom—By KENNETH MINOGUE



IN 1964, a well-known American political theorist introduced a collection of political essays with a section "On the Crisis, So-called, of Liberalism."[1] He was writing of a different crisis, and probably of a different liberalism, from what we may experience today, for times change and places make a difference. But he was undoubtedly right to indicate in his title a certain scepticism about the whole idea of a "crisis of liberalism." In doing so, however, he did not for a moment deny that liberalism faced serious dangers. Our problem is to disentangle the idea of a "crisis of liberalism" from the attention-grabbing rhetoric of publicists, and to consider whether the idea of crisis might play a more serious role in the business of understanding liberalism and its perils. The point from which we may begin is the observation that the term "liberalism" itself only became current in Europe during the 1830s, and that it was only a short time later (in 1847–48) that Marx and Engels declared that the closely related thing which they then called "bourgeois society" was in crisis. We thus find that liberalism was *born* to crisis.

Many of its elements were in place long before it had a name. Individualist ideas of rights were central to Enlightenment thought, and are often traced back to John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1690). But that work, in its turn, merely formulated ideas which had long been advanced in forms we should easily recognise as liberal. Some of these ideas were theological, and had to do with the invention of the new moral organ called a "conscience." Others were political, and stemmed from the revival of classical republicanism inspired by the writings of Machiavelli. Altogether then, it makes good sense to identify the term "liberalism" with the political ideas which have made modern Europe a distinctive civilisation. In all other civilisations, some idea of justice as right order has always harmonised the values of society; but, in Europe, freedom was unleashed as a coordinate value, and the consequences were in the highest degree dynamic. Modern industry was the most important of those consequences, and the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 may be understood as a howl of rage and pain demanding the restitution of justice and right order.

Born in crisis, Liberalism has remained ridden by crisis ever since. This term "*crisis*" is of Greek derivation, and gains its force from its medical usage as describing the climax of some illness at which the patient will either die or recover. A crisis is thus a matter of life or death, and the only reason the term can be used, over and over again, to describe recurring conditions in modern Europe is that we have tamed the term by metaphor, and that we often think of our world as a succession of discontinuities (or "revolutions") rather than in terms of the changing fortunes of one stable, and continuous, form of life.

The conceptual problems arising from the idea of "crisis" can be solved by recognising that what pre-eminently characterises a modern society is a love of dramatic changes and catastrophes which, with our addiction to hyperbole, we insist on calling "crises." In traditional societies, as we imagine them to be, change usually happens slowly, within the firm corsetry of the prevailing idea of right order. This does not stop catastrophes from happening—an incursion of Mongols, plagues, a succession of bad harvests—but it does mean that traditional societies resemble those lead-weighted toys which always tend to return to their original position. We, by contrast, suffer from the restlessness diagnosed by Pascal; and everything, from morals to technology, is in a ferment of change. Skirts move like yo-yos between the ankle and the pelvis, and we have hardly learned to use the gramophone before we must begin mastering tapes. Practices as disparate as family life and the writing of novels are thought to be subject to successions of crises; and old forms are ever dying. Meanwhile, on the periphery of our lives, Communists and other believers in steady-state living keep up a kind of crisis-babble, eternally announcing the final crisis which portends the onset of a revolutionary transformation.

The truth, however, is that we have become rather addicted to our crises, as anyone who reads the newspapers can see perfectly well. Crises are, to put it vulgarly, fun. No doubt they are always painful for those most affected, but they also provide challenge, novelty, and an opportunity for new people to come forward and shine. Modern Europeans have tamed the crisis, just as they have tamed the sea and the sky. The crises of the modern world are like the thrills and spills of the fairground: they are manageable forms of excitement with the

[1] David Spitz, *Essays in the Liberal Idea of Freedom* (1964), Foreword.

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risk of a nasty accident, but so circumscribed that they don't usually get out of hand.

IF THIS IS ACCEPTED as a true account of how we live now, then a real "crisis of liberalism" would have to be a kind of *meta*-crisis, a crisis in our crisis-ridden practices, a crisis to end all crises. In Communist language, such a thing is called a "revolution", and what it promises is the replacement of the anxiety of constant change by a rational set of arrangements for satisfying a fixed repertoire of desires which are referred to, in Marxist discourse, as "needs." This leads me to focus this discussion on two central questions: first, what is a "meta-crisis" of liberalism? Secondly, what are the real dangers facing our liberal civilisation as the 20th century draws to a close?

Anyone who wishes to see what a real crisis of liberalism looks like need go no further than the rest of the world. Over the last few centuries, Western manners and technology have spread to every corner of the globe, and exerted a powerful attraction. Few traditional societies have not suffered from the erosion of their traditions by the impact of the West, and given that the only way to keep up with Western power was to follow Western technology, they have all been tempted in varying degrees to establish liberal political institutions: parliaments, political parties, and the rest. What has usually, though not invariably, resulted has been a parody of liberal institutions, and in many cases the fear of disorder has led to an autocratic reaction in an effort to supplement the waning cohesion of tradition. The frenzy of Iranian politics is perhaps the best illustration of this process; the recent pendulum swing from democracy to (yet again) dictatorship in Nigeria underscores it. Nothing could testify more clearly to the attraction of Western practices than the violence of their rejection. And the problem faced by the peoples of other civilisations results from the fact that the enjoyment of liberal freedoms is only possible on the basis of a complicated set of restraints and inhibitions, invisible to the naked eye, which constitute the hidden foundations of a liberal society.

For liberty is a skill which Europeans have been developing over many centuries, and the problem of non-Europeans is like that of spectators who wish to imitate a sportsman or an artist performing effortlessly, as it seems, all manner of brilliant feats, without realising that this skill is the outcome of much patient self-discipline of which the spectator knows nothing. It all *looks* so easy: throw away the crutches of an all-prescribing tradition, and walk. All that is needed, it often seemed to outsiders, was to pick up some patter about freedom, democracy and rights, and everyone could enjoy the free and easy ways of the Westerner, with his apparently effortless combination of casualness and efficiency. As with most things in life, the benefits are more visible than the costs; and of the costs of liberalism, there are two kinds. One is to be found in the undesirable consequences of so much freedom—such as loneliness, commercialisation, a certain measure of personal corruption and the inevitable vulgarity which results from unchaining the *vulgus*. These things may well be the price we must pay in order to enjoy our own liberties. But my concern is with a different kind of cost, a cost without which liberalism would not be possible at all; and to understand this more subtle type of cost, we need to consider precisely what it is that is absolutely central to liberalism.

THERE ARE TWO WAYS of answering this question, and the first can be explained most easily if we consider how individuals were bound by authority in the Middle Ages. Everyone had a master, and that master himself had a master, all the way up to the King in one sphere, and the Pope in another. And above both of these supreme personages stood God himself. Further, in everyday life, the possibilities of change were circumscribed by customs and traditions which to a very large degree determined everything from vocation to marriage. Step by step, these restrictions were dissolved. Calvin and others stood for "Christian liberty", though they often had a most repressive way of organising it. John Milton stood for easier divorce, and an end to the censorship of publications. John Locke could recognise authority, but thought it ought to be "representative." Mary Wollstonecraft thought that women should no longer live in tutelage to their husbands. Step by step, over a very long time, individuals acquired right after right to determine virtually all the details of their own lives: what job they would take; in which country they might live; whom they would marry; what religion they would profess; how they would dress; what opinions they would utter, and what books they would read.

Now, each of these collapses of an outside authority multiplied occasions for choice. Most people saw no need to think much about religion in earlier societies: they accepted it from the local vicar. Now they were required to make up their mind on such important matters as the existence of God. As this process continued, decisions were taken out of the hands of parents, elders, magistrates, nobles, priests, kings and other notables, and put into the hands of ordinary people. At nearly every dramatic point in this progress of liberalism, prophets warned of the imminent collapse of civilisation, but it has not happened yet, and the fact that we have gone so far and can still maintain an orderly and peaceful society seems to show that "liberalisation" is easy and relatively costless.

The central problem, however, is *how* is it possible at all? If you unleash the desires and inclinations of ordinary men and women, you would seem to run the risk of precisely the disorder from which the authority of government had been required to rescue mankind. How is it that we have so far avoided such a disaster?

THE ANSWER to this question may be found if we attend to the most striking feature of the way we live. We make our public decisions by way of parliaments in which different groups of representatives criticise each other. We dispense justice by way of a ritual in which two sides debate with one another. We organise our production by allowing different producers to make what they like and charge us what they will. Competition, in other words, is built into the way we live at almost all levels of society. Even in religion and philosophy, the truth is thought to emerge, if it ever does,

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from the conflicting arguments of different sects.

We live, in other words, in an *adversarial* culture; and this feature of our lives has in recent years become a subject of great interest because there has now emerged, in Japan, a type of culture which is radically different from ours—being essentially cooperative rather than adversarial—yet which can also successfully create a modern technological economy. Now, the emergence of the Japanese model to prominence—"Capitalism and the Buddhist ethos" might be the central theme of a Max Weber in Tokyo—is important morally and politically because it dramatises the possibility that we may be able to choose between an efficient economy, on the one hand, and the competitive liberal institutions which previously seemed to be the only foundation for such an economy. Socialism has long been the *dream* of such a dissociation, but its waking forms have been inefficient and, frequently, unpleasant. Japan is, potentially, efficiency purged of liberalism.

The fact that our culture is profoundly competitive, however, only makes our original problem more difficult. Even in highly cohesive societies, conflicts between communities, personalities, cults and interests often reach an intensity which leads to violence and even civil war. Man, we know, can become "a wolf to man", and without government we are prone to sink into a Hobbesian state of nature. How much more likely this must seem to be when the very practices of society not only encourage conflict, but would seem to legitimate it. And is it not further proof of this danger that the moment any state, even a liberal state, becomes involved in a war or some other type of crisis, popular sentiment quickly demands a government of all the talents. Indeed, within living memory, Europe was powerfully affected by mass movements which sought to replace the existing liberal democracies by dictators who would give "leadership to the nation" and thus unify its energies. Most European states in early modern times were ruled by absolute monarchs, and even today, Spain, whose problems with democracy led to civil war and dictatorship in the 1930s, is an object of nervous attention to all liberals. The problem may be put in the most general terms as follows: in a competitive culture, some people win and some people lose. It must therefore generate chronic inequality, and this will always tend to destabilise society. Such an argument is found in Book VIII of Plato's *Republic*, and it is also the basis of Marxist doctrine.

To mention the doctrines of Marx, who was a notable critic of liberalism from somewhere within the liberal tradition, is to invoke the comprehensive rejection of liberalism which is summed up in the entire Marxist criticism of "capitalism." And if we look briefly at the doctrines associated with that concept, we are instructed that liberalism not only creates the conditions for an unstable society, but, worse, is the outcome of the most selfish passions of mankind. According to Marx, the bourgeoisie had simplified life into the most abstract form of conflict: that between two selfish people both seeking the same thing, a form of conflict currently discussed by political theorists and economists as a "zero-sum game." Liberals have often been their own worst enemies, and they have certainly done immense damage to their cause by theorising the competitor as a man dominated by self-interest, and competition as a form of selfishness indifferent to the needs of others. Marx derived from Jeremy Bentham and other utilitarians the idea that the moral life under bourgeois society consists simply of mutual exploitation; and against this he juxtaposed the higher moral life of the socialist community.

ALL OF THESE THEORIES betray muddle and confusion, and they may be easily refuted by pointing to the testimony of experience. Is it really the case that European societies have exhibited nothing but a narrow selfishness? Have they not abolished slavery, set up hospitals for the sick, reformed prisoners, diffused education, and made provision for the needy? The idea that a *communal* being can never be selfish is, in philosophical terms, a category mistake: precisely because they are communal beings, they do not have individual desires, recognised as such, which they may selfishly indulge. But they may certainly construe the communal situation to their personal benefit. In the relations between, say, the Untouchables of India and the castes above them, the question of selfishness never arises; but unselfishness is far from guaranteeing that moral problems have been solved.

It is more important, however, to recognise the philosophical causes of this mistake. The cause lies in being unable to distinguish between *conflict* and *competition*. In a conflict, the parties may get what they want, or not get what they want, or compromise. Competition, however, is a type of conflict which takes place within rules, and whose model is a game. When I play tennis against an "opponent", I am certainly concerned to defeat him, but if the issue were merely a matter of victory or defeat, I could guarantee a flow of continuing successes by choosing feeble opponents. In fact, it is profoundly unsatisfactory to play feeble opponents; indeed, it is profoundly unsatisfactory to keep on winning. The reason for this is that at the heart of competitive games lies an essentially cooperative enterprise. From this point of view, each player *cooperates* in bringing out the skills of the other, and the pleasure we get from the game itself (by contrast with the distinguishable pleasure we get from winning) consists in the satisfaction we find in the qualities and skills drawn out of us by the excitement of the competition.

Such a situation is entirely different from a conflict between, say, two states for a piece of land, or for some other tangible asset. This means that competition is not to be properly understood as a pure species of conflict at all, because although it involves conflict, it also involves cooperation. Nor does it have anything very much to do with selfishness, for we are perfectly capable, as we play, of appreciating the skill, and often the generosity, of our opponent. It is true, no doubt, that we may become so preoccupied with winning the game that we construe it as a form of conflict; and if we care only about winning, we may be tempted to cheat, which is an infallible sign that competition has turned into conflict.

From a traditional point of view, then, a liberal society presents a profoundly misleading appearance. It looks like nothing so much as a continuous indulgence of quarrelling, whereas it is in fact a remarkably, if disguisedly, homogeneous association of people. The proof of this lies in the inventive way in which the citizens of a liberal state can cooperate in times of war or some other national emergency. Adolf Hitler

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appears to have miscalculated the likely social cohesion of the British in the 1930s on the basis of just such a misunderstanding of a liberal society. We may put the point the other way round: a liberal society is an instrument for turning conflicts into forms of competition, and thus eliciting from its citizens a disguised form of social cohesion which constitutes what I have called the hidden foundations of liberalism.

A DISTINCTION very much like the distinction I have sketched between conflict and competition has a long history in political thought.

Machiavelli, for example, argues that the conflict between the patricians and the plebeians in Rome actually contributed to the liberty of the Romans rather than threatening it.[2] It caused the constitution to be reformed, and it enhanced the *virtu* of the citizens. His argument was very far, however, from the conclusion that *all* conflict is invigorating. The test of its beneficial character was that when Rome herself was threatened, both patricians and plebeians united in her defence. For Rome in those days was a healthy republic, and the opposite of such a condition was called by Machiavelli "corruption."

Corruption signified that the citizens lacked patriotism and put their private concerns before the public good. Nor did it matter whether such private concerns were commercial or heroic—the prosecution of a vendetta against another family, for example, could be no less corrupt than taking bribes. All involvement in purely private interests threatened the state. This conception of virtue as the effect of a patriotic character in which all men's actions were subordinated to one ultimate standard, was characteristic of republican writers who took their inspiration from Machiavelli, including Montesquieu who contributed to liberalism the theory of the separation of powers.

THE EMERGENCE of a clear understanding of the nature of competition from a rather confused intuition that conflict may have some beneficial aspects took a very long time; and it remains, even today, caviar to the general. Those who actually did understand the issues raised by liberalism, however, all attempted to answer the question of how an essential unity could be conserved amid so much competitive diversity, and they usually answered it in terms of some dominant unifying passion that could override the dangerous potentialities of conflict. Many followed Machiavelli in believing a patriotic concern for the public good to be the one essential thing, while in more recent times this idea has been intellectualised into "an agreement on fundamentals." Such a view is stated clearly in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776. "We hold these truths to be self-evident", it begins, and proceeds to enumerate the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The liberal experience of the Americans is surely the most significant of all national histories in the story of liberalism, for the United States actually had the problem, on the largest scale, of incorporating into a liberal society "barbarians" who had to be taught the usages of a liberal society, because they had had no real direct experience of such living. The solution was to build up patriotism by concentrating upon symbol and legend. This kind of social cement is, however, common to all societies; and no doubt some element of it is indispensable. But what has become increasingly clear is that liberalism, as the politics appropriate to life construed as a kind of competitive game, actually rests upon a *procedural* type of unity. Conflicts are to be adjudicated in terms of a recognised set of rules, and to most genuine frustrations there corresponds some hopeful course of action, either by appeal to a higher court, or by an attempt to gain political support in an attempt to change the law. One might say that everybody *agrees* on the rules of the game; but the reality is, more precisely, that nearly everybody *practises* this kind of law-channelled existence, whatever opinions may be uttered.

WE ARE NOW in a position to recognise what makes liberalism distinctive, and, by answering that question, to develop a serious idea of what a crisis of liberalism might be.

Liberalism may be defined in terms of two socio-political conditions to which it stands opposed. The first is the Hobbesian state of nature, characterised by reciprocal frustration arising from universal insecurity. The second is any form of despotism, in which *all* government, all ordering of human affairs, is concentrated in the state or some other single source of order, with the consequence that individuals are drained of moral autonomy and become entirely creatures of impulse and need. The master concept of this latter condition is satisfaction.

These two opposites of liberalism are the abstract polarities of much human social organisation, and may also be seen approximated to in cultures which have been touched by liberalism without ever quite mastering the skill appropriate to it. Russia is one example of this; and perhaps Spain might be cited as another. Screws are always being tightened or loosened, and it is difficult to dispense with them altogether. Now, if these antitheses may be seen as constituting the dialectic of politics in many countries, liberalism may be seen as the emergence of a way of life which avoids both. It does so by a novel extension of the idea of moral and political responsibility. Liberalism is the skill of individual self-government under the law, and for this reason, it has often been construed in terms of the idea of moral autonomy.

However pleased we may be with ourselves for possessing this skill, we ought not to fall into the error of imagining that others merely *lack* it. Such a mistake would prevent us from understanding the serious reasons people have for rejecting liberalism—reasons which are constantly being introduced into our political discussions by one of liberalism's indispensable partners, conservatism. We pay a price for all the skills we develop, and the price we pay for liberalism is, perhaps, a loss of spontaneity and of the warm cohesion of

[2] *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius* (tr. Christian E. Detmold, New York, 1950), Book I, Ch. 3.

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many small associations in other cultures. The liberal individualist is a character with a rich variety of interests and attachments; and he often pays for that variety by a certain lack of intensity in any particular preoccupations. Further, when human beings are liberated to express themselves, they often express unlovely aspects of their inner life.

Nevertheless, by contrast with the hothouse constriction of other societies, liberalism is the only garden in which a thousand flowers do actually bloom; and it has an attraction for human beings subject to alien despotisms such as to justify the widespread hostility and hatred in which it is held and with which it must learn to live. The mere existence of a liberal society, to which the refugees may flee, makes every other form of power insecure.

If liberalism is, then, volitional autonomy under the law, the only real crisis *of liberalism* [3] would be the destruction of that autonomy. Such a destruction could only be achieved in two ways.

Firstly, if the spheres within which individuals were autonomous were to be destroyed. Secondly, if the rules within which individuals live were to become commands issuing from a single despotic source. And we may, perhaps, distinguish different ways in which the free citizen of a liberal state might succumb to the slavery of life by commandment. The most obvious way is, precisely, falling under the sway of a despot, such as has happened in the totalitarian experiences of our century. The less obvious way would develop through a steady increase in the density of regulation to a point where it began to threaten the autonomy of individuals, because every step an individual thought of taking in pursuit of his own purposes would bring him into conflict with some regulation or other. This latter threat to liberalism would be peculiarly dangerous because it might happen very gradually and, since there are good reasons for every regulation, it might advance at every step under the names of virtue, compassion, justice, or the protection of the needy.

FUNDAMENTALLY, both these threats to liberalism can be reduced to the single principle in that any threat to moral autonomy is a threat to liberalism. Now just such a threat to autonomy might come not only from a steady increase in the density of regulation, but also from slow and steady changes in the public opinion of liberal societies.

Like all practices, liberalism is based upon a number of constitutive "myths" without which divergent practices would begin to develop. I call these beliefs "myths" because they take for granted—as undoubtedly true—propositions which philosophers in a university might well find it difficult to prove or even substantiate. The most important of liberal "myths" is that each person is psychologically independent and morally autonomous. The presupposition of a liberal society, which in this case we take from the Greeks, is that if politics can be based on persuasion between citizens, then man must be a rational animal. It follows that a passionate interest (one might even call it a morbid interest) in man as an animal victimised by his environment—his passions, his parents, advertisers, and the society he lives in, etc.[4]—may lead some people to an impatience with persuasion (for creatures, thus understood, cannot be *persuaded* to the right thing) and to an addiction to a dictatorship of the righteous. For this reason, most versions of "Positivism" represent a threat to liberalism, and in a society in which such doctrines run riot, we might well talk of a "crisis." Writing in the 1930s about the way in which a philosophical doctrine he called "realism" debased the value in ordinary life of ideals and principles, the English philosopher R. G. Collingwood wrote:

> "If the realists had wanted to train up a generation of Englishmen and Englishwomen expressly as the potential dupes of every adventurer in morals or politics, commerce or religion, who should appeal to their emotions and promise them private gains which he neither could procure them nor even meant to procure them, no better way of doing it could have been discovered."[5]

Just the kind of simple-minded scepticism about moral responsibility to which Collingwood objects is the first stock-in-trade picked up by the young in modern universities. Being thus persuaded that human life is not fundamentally distinguishable from meteorology, as consisting of swirling natural elements that carry us along with them, the young are all the more prone to explain the resulting anxieties by the "catastrophism" which currently feeds its morbid imagination upon visions of nuclear holocaust, widespread starvation, environmental destruction, and the sufferings of foxes.

The more people cease to believe that the autonomy of the individual is important in itself, the more they will concentrate upon generalised results, which means *imposing* supposed desirabilities by legislation. The liberal principle of "equality of opportunity," for example, is thought to be deficient if the opportunities offered do not produce what are regarded as the statistically desirable distributions of race, class, or sex. The individual's own endeavours may therefore be by-passed; and the required result imposed by legislation. In this manner, which is, of course, precisely despotic, the determination of human affairs as the outcome of multifarious human thoughts and decisions is replaced by a single bureaucratic imperative; and one more rigid feature is clamped upon liberal societies whose flexible creativity in earlier times derived precisely from the absence of such bureaucratic impositions.

Schools and universities are notable spheres of private initiative which have, in this manner, been recently subordinated to government policies. Their fate illustrates well the steady erosion of those spheres in which individuals could actually exercise their own judgment about how, and with whom, they choose to live. The reasons given for such intrusions into privacy are, of course, always of the most virtuous; for a sentimental rhetoric of virtue and compassion is the protective colouring of most contemporary political movements. Recently, this type of development has made notable strides, especially in the United States, where all discipline in schools is required by law to conform to all the requirements of "due process"; and even in families, where

[3] The contrast, in our current atmosphere of castrophism, is with ideas about the crisis of human life and its future on this planet.

[4] I have discussed this doctrine in "The Myth of Social Conditioning", *Policy Review* (No. 18), Fall 1981.

[5] *An Autobiography* (Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 48–49.

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children may appeal to public officials specifically charged with the protection of their rights against parents. One teacher restrained a student who was disrupting a test in school, and reported that the next morning, a complaint about his behaviour having been made, "the police came to my home and arrested me. They led me out of my home in handcuffs. . . ." [6] What is remarkable about such developments as these is that the most direct type of threat to a liberal society results from a purported *increase* in human rights. It thus illustrates that many of the main dangers to liberalism derive not from such classical liberal fears as censorship, governmental secrecy, and defects of civil rights (all of which are indeed dangers, though of a familiar and manageable kind) but from implementing what seem, on the face of it, to be impeccably liberal proposals.

I CONCLUDE that there is an important place in liberal thought for some concept of the crisis of liberalism, but only after it has been very carefully disentangled from the more familiar "crisis rhetoric" to which we are so addicted. Monitoring the crisis of liberalism requires an analytical preoccupation with the character of liberal societies, which change subtly from year to year; and such monitoring is necessary because liberal societies are, to a degree way beyond any other form of human arrangement, a continual voyage into uncharted waters. Every situation we meet is new. The fact that so many crises in the past have come and gone has given us the courage and the confidence not to strip off all canvas every time there is a nasty swell. But it ought not to obscure the fact that merely because we got away with some bit of liberation in the past, a similar liberalisation now will have no dire consequences. With each generation, we drift further away from the many supports of the tradition from which we arose, and it remains an open question how much our stability and our success really depended upon such ballast. It is certainly diminishing rapidly.

[6] Cited from *The New York Teacher* by Gerald Grant in "Children: Rights and Adult Confusions" in *The Public Interest*, (69), Fall 1982, p. 95.

Anobium Hirtum

Each bible wears its token scent,
Its snuff of dust, its guarantee,
Its brewed, unhealthy testament
To genuine antiquity,
While vague collectors potter round
And dip from book to fancied book,
Uncertain between quarter-bound
Old psalters and a Pentateuch;
Find quandaries in the piled, oblique
And faded Roman letters, hear
The rustle of a Standard Greek
Releasing its bacteria.
Alive on this ramshackle stall
Religion finds a resting place,
An unhygienic festival
Of love, humility and grace,
A Babel of resistant themes
Clapped up in boards as sunlight picks
Its way along the gingered seams
And kippers each stamped crucifix.
Although their languages are dead
These leaves and spines are running wild
And what turns on them overfed,
Abundant, multiple and spoiled:
This way, perhaps, the Word plays host
And Matthew, Mark and Luke and John,
The Father, Son and Holy Ghost
Incarnate are, and nourished on.

John Levett

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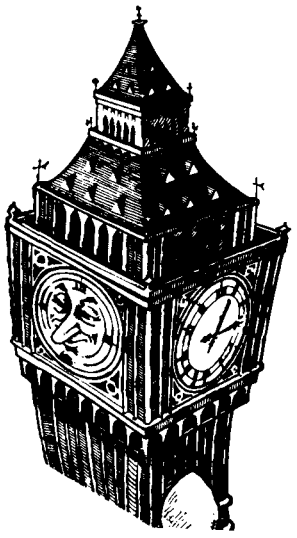
NOTES & TOPICS

London Commentary

Order! Order!

By Edward Pearce



UNDER FIRE RECENTLY has been the Speaker of the House of Commons, Bernard Weatherill. He has the usual measure of parliamentary disorder to cope with, and at the same time he is not quite Mrs Thatcher's favourite person. Now, distinctions must be made. The Speaker of our Parliament is not, repeat not, a partisan figure. Tip O'Neill can favour President Reagan with his advice, disapproval, and all that a modest Boston machine-politician has to offer the hemisphere. Mr Weatherill, by contrast, put all party allegiance off when the gold-frogged gown and full-bottomed wig of Mr Speaker were put on. Mr O'Neill is an influential force for and in the Democratic Party. Mr Weatherill is no longer a Conservative. By ancient practice he is divorced from the political party of his original choice.

He is in the Chair to keep order, to preside over business, to mind the House's internal law book of custom and practice, to maintain communications *and to be trusted*! There used to be an understanding that the Speaker would be a back-bencher, since he is intended to be the guardian of the rights and interests of back-benchers. But within a constitution which grows perceptibly more executive-heavy with each passing year, we have had as Speaker since 1951 and before the present incumbent only one who was a back-bencher—Dr Horace King. The Tories, not the most constitutionally nice of people, in 1951 switched a former Minister, William Morrison, into the Chair over the head of a Labour Deputy Speaker. Mr Morrison was succeeded by (of all unsuitable appointments) a law officer, the Solicitor General, Sir Harry Hylton-Foster. But brazen impropriety might have been alleged at a later date, when the job passed to Selwyn Lloyd. In fact, Mr Speaker Lloyd was excellent. But he had to achieve bipartisanship and a feel for the back benches with the handicap of having been Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the House, and Lord High Everything Else!

Good as Mr Lloyd was, his appointment was wrong in principle; and it helped to entrench the Ministerialist claim to the Chair. So when Labour's turn came round, George Thomas (former Welsh Minister) was appointed. And Thomas's Speakership was highly popular. He is a witty man with a light touch, and one who has a gift for defusing riotous moments, of which we have plenty, with self-deprecating, very human little jokes. However, his long-term judgment of the House may have been less good than his excellent tactics. George Thomas was another Ministerialist who identified very strongly with the executive. Also, at a time when Labour in Britain was undergoing its fissiparous crisis, with 30 MPs taking off for the cold sea and interesting times of Social Democracy, Thomas belonged by private conviction and friendship with the Labour Right. In his partisan days he had been the ally and lieutenant of James Callaghan, and did not see events very differently from that admirable exponent of the working-class conservatism which votes Labour.

He was faced, as Speakers have been increasingly, with gross boorishness and saloon-bar behaviour, coming principally from a group of fairly Left-wing and violently anti-Establishment-minded Labour Members sitting below the gangway in a row now known as the Bench of Hooligans. To say that George Thomas loathed these people and their unacknowledged leader, the loud, sometimes amusing but ultimately rather brutish Dennis Skinner, would be to push understatement to the wilder shores of excess. There was steady war between the Chair and the Hooligans, with Mr Speaker throwing his authority its fullest distance and Mr Skinner out of the door. The Speaker has power to suspend Members. He gave the impression of regretting that he could not do so literally. At the same time he took an indulgent view of the devices by which the executive helped itself from an already dug-in and comfortable position. Planted questions—intended to give the Prime Minister a free shot at the Opposition during Question Time, when she should be answering for her own responsibilities—were not slapped down. The arrogance of office was quietly confirmed and an impression was given, without intention, that the Chair was an extension of the executive.

NOW, THE NEW SPEAKER (he was chosen just after the election) has enormous burdens to carry. For a start, the Prime Minister did not want him in the job. Indeed he is the first of her post-electoral banana skins, for it is comprehensibly not her business to choose the Speaker. But Mrs Thatcher conformed to Pearce's Law: all governments at all times push their luck.

Margaret Thatcher had wanted another Ministerialist, Humphrey Atkins. There were two objections to this: that Atkins was broadly unpopular within his own Party, whose Chief Whip he had been, and that for the Prime Minister to be seen to be pre-empting one of the very few decisions left to the House of Commons involved pushing luck further than luck could conceivably go. A conflict occurred between the Prime Minister and her own back-benchers; indeed, it was apparent

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for some time before the election that Mrs Thatcher wanted to stop the Deputy Speaker, Bernard Weatherill, and was insensitive to the fact that the Speakership is not a junior ministry. After the election had given her 396 seats out of 650 she did not grow more sensitive. She was, however, unable to counter the wishes of her own parliamentarians. They did not wish to have the Deputy Speaker humiliated and pushed into a siding, or to have a candidate with a Downing Street certificate nominated as their spontaneous choice. With no very convincing show of good grace, Mrs Thatcher accepted a small political defeat on the morning of a Roman triumph at the polls.

In consequence we have in the Chair a man who has no illusion that authority likes him, and who owes no debts to authority. Well-disposed anyway towards the interests of back-benchers, Mr Weatherill, though not vindictive, must have found that personal detachment from the Prime Minister's circle strengthened his determination to restore the Chair to a proper neutrality. He showed this first by a greater tolerance towards the Bench of Hooligans. What Speaker Thomas expelled, Speaker Weatherill chides. And in consequence the Tory Whips have voiced their displeasure. But then a Tory Whip once told me that George Thomas was the best Speaker since the war—not, if you think about it, the sort of place such a compliment should be coming from.

THE WHIPS HAVE GROWN used to getting their own way. The Government party is also accustomed to neutralising Prime Minister's Question Time, the quarter-hour sessions subject to heavy publicity twice a week, with planted and time-wasting queries from its own infantry. Where Speaker Thomas let through a question about the Opposition's conduct, Speaker Weatherill sent Mrs Thatcher back to her seat with the injunction that questions which did not relate to her responsibilities might not be asked. In other words, although Question Time is an occasion for the Government to defend itself against criticism, it may not be rigged with sweetheart ploys which frustrate that initial purpose. Mr Weatherill has kept this up, and one back-bencher was reduced to making three attempts to couch a question so that it obeyed the newly resurrected proprieties. When Peter Walker, the Energy Minister, wandered off his specific brief to make purely political comments about the miners' strike, he was told not to and put back on to narrower lines. This is a new experience for Ministers. They expected protection from inconvenience, the sharp disciplining of trouble-makers, and a wide latitude in respect of the rules for themselves. Under the new régime they are getting the exact opposite—mildness towards bad lads, and firm orders and rebukes if necessary to straying Ministers.

All this is played out in the context of a Commons which is unhappy about itself and in the process of getting a bad name since we took to letting in radio microphones which broadcast daily to the nation the strange baying noise which between 3.15 and about 4.00 p.m. passes for debate. The conduct of the House has declined in recent years and although radio conveys a misleading impression through poor acoustics and the impression that this wild session is typical of the whole day, it is sure as hell doing Parliament no good at all.

THE TRUTH IS THAT the Chamber has declined in importance. We have a vicious circle in that all the devices to accommodate the frustration of MPs, like the new Select Committees which take place in semi-public in rooms upstairs, diminish further the Chamber which they supplement.

A diminished Chamber has less and less compulsion to behave itself. The contempt which, feeding two ways, has grown up between the executive and the difficult back-bencher, is reduced not at all by the assumption that public questioning is a nonsense to be foozled while the grown-ups function on Select Committees upstairs.

The assumption is true, of course, and Select Committees are being treated with ever greater respect by Ministers as places where difficult and constructive questions are asked. But the perfunctory condition to which the Chamber could be reduced is violently undesirable in itself. Because the British party system is so strong, the individual MP has always had less leverage than his US counterpart. He will fall or be re-elected on the strength of the party ticket. Sustained cross-voting is unimaginable; even to abstain in a division takes numbers and courage. The majority is built in, with no vote having to be fought for. At the same time, Members are more heavily involved, through an example they have set themselves, with case work and constituency problems than any previous generation of MPs. They are busy, serious, active and conscientious—yet the reputation of the Commons goes down.

The conduct of the Bench of Hooligans—shouting down the Alliance MPs whom they hate, buffooning their way exhibitionistically through Question Time—represents a tiny sliver of parliamentary life but it is the one everyone recognises. And because it commands the middle of the day and offers the Prime Minister to the public in a set piece twice a week, it must be heavily reported.

THIS IS THE MINEFIELD which Mr Weatherill has inherited, and, to mix metaphors, it is an evolving minefield. He does so at a time when the Labour Left feels disinherited and sometimes distinctly anti-parliamentary, and when the catch-all slogan thrown against the Government by Labour is that it is "authoritarian." That charge is a huge exaggeration of what might better be put as a serious charge of peremptoriness. But it reflects a mood which parliamentary discord simply amplifies. It has always mattered that there should be proper ventilation of Opposition discontents and those of private Members (in so far as our MPs are private). The pity is that intelligent advantage is not taken of the Speaker's attempt to sort out Question Time.

The single most difficult and inconvenient thing which could happen to Mrs Thatcher would be for the Opposition to be sensible, for the noise to subside, and for measured unhysterical questions to be put. Neil Kinnock, Labour's new leader, for all his faults of verbal nonsense, understands this and is making a better shot of his Front-Bench role than had been expected of him. Sensibly, he is pressing his own right to have three bites at the cherry, something which the Tory Whips dislike as much as they do the disallowing of planted questions. But if he is given a touch of sense by his own football crowd, it is

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open to Mr Kinnock to take advantage of fairer conditions created by the Speaker.

Select Committees in their remote garrets are prized for detailed and difficult quizzing of ministers and their Civil Service advisers. Question Time in the Chamber cannot do that, but with a touch of cool from the Labour leader it could be made difficult and specific for Mrs Thatcher. And since she is a great coper with detail, it could become actually rather instructive. Hardly anyone realises the fact, but Mr Speaker has tentatively created one precondition for a more responsible Chamber.

IF THE HANDLING OF Question Time is made harder for the government machine, so the incentive to draw blood with a sword-point rather than a hatchet increases. There is actually a case for going further than Mr Weatherill is free to do and confining questions to the Opposition parties. Is it possible for the silliness which has grown up partly out of frustration to recede if that frustration is met and accommodated? Only an Opposition (or Oppositions since we have the smaller parties) can answer that. One of them already has: the reputation of Dr David Owen, leader of the Social Democrats, has taken a flying leap simply on the strength of his handling of questions. Sharp, measured, but entirely civil and without the unmixed curse of a mob behind him, Dr Owen has demonstrated that Question Time *is* useful, *can* be exploited and *does* trouble the Government.

Because he can handle the despised quarter-hour while the Liberal leader, David Steel—a long-time disliker of the Chamber—cannot, Dr Owen has made himself in the eyes of the listening public and of very many Liberals the *de facto* leader of the two-party Alliance. The Chamber is supposed to be declining. Many politicians will tell you that they hate it, but it remains the squash-court wall off which the vital shots are played. It is a healthy counterforce against the élitism which affects too many MPs with ministerial ideas. It is the test of courage and quick thinking, and (disgraceful, trivialising, and shameful though this may be) it is the test of personality. It is only in the Chamber that the limitations of highly qualified men show up.

Bureaucrats forced to debate in public have a way of sounding like bureaucrats, likewise bores, likewise prigs. Dislike of the Chamber has its roots partly in fastidiousness and partly in fear of its rough democratic effectiveness.

The Speaker has behaved as an upholder of the Chamber's rights. He has made a mild assault on executive evasions of their duty to the Chamber; he has shown a slight tendency to lean towards a heavily outnumbered Opposition which is also in danger of being demoralised, and to be helpful to the Government's critics. All boats have to tack differently in different circumstances. And I would judge that, although he is not a dominant personality and is accused of weakness, our new Speaker has shown very profound long-term good judgment by helming this particular boat in a way which will make intelligent and hopeful exploitation of these public occasions more likely. The Opposition parties have been given a ball. It is up to them to run with it, not shout at it.

Thinking about the Violence in Lebanon

A Conversation between ELIE KEDOURIE *&* ANDREW MANGO

KEDOURIE: The horrific and pitiful events in the Lebanon—events which will no doubt continue, and perhaps increase in horror—are in our minds continually. But what struck me in recent months was one event in particular: the murder of Dr Malcolm Kerr, the President of the American University in Beirut. It seemed a purely gratuitous act, of advantage to no one. It shocked me especially, because I had met Dr Kerr and such acquaintance brings home to one the savagery of the situation. When the news of his murder came I could not help reflecting ruefully on the situation which brought it about. Dr Kerr was the President of a famous university which had been in existence for decades and was considered a beacon of learning for the whole area. Did the very existence of the American University in Beirut and what it taught somehow contribute to the situation in Lebanon, the situation in the whole Middle East area, as well as to this tragic assassination in the University grounds?

The University of Beirut is an American university, a Western university, inculcating a Western ethos and Western habits of mind. Part of this ethos is the notion that politics is an ordinary kind of life, an ordinary kind of activity; that to engage in politics, to pursue the political life, is beneficial to oneself and to society at large. In its native habitat, the West, this view of politics is buttressed by a tradition and a whole range of social and political arrangements. There it makes sense; and one doesn't expect anything very horrific to result from it. But in Middle Eastern conditions, as we have seen

THIS IS *the second in a series of conversations (see "The Middle East: Illusions Great and Small",* ENCOUNTER, *September–October 1982) between Elie Kedourie, Professor of Politics at the University of London and Editor of "Middle Eastern Affairs", and Dr Andrew Mango, who works in London as a broadcaster and is the author of three books on Turkey.*

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again and again, the aspiration to engage in politics in the hope of "making things better" seems inevitably to lead to oppression, torture, murder, and terrorism. Such politics seems to envelop the most benign activities and the most wholesome instincts in a dreadful and sinister pall.

The murder of Dr Kerr in the grounds of his own university put me in mind of some lines by W. B. Yeats, who of all modern poets that I know is the most subtle in his understanding of political deceptions and the horrors attending the life of politics.

> *Did that play of mine send out*
> *Certain men the English shot?*
> *Did words of mine put too great strain*
> *On that woman's reeling brain?*
> *Could my spoken words have checked*
> *That whereby a house lay wrecked?*

The kind of question that Yeats asks with reference to the Civil War in Ireland at the end of World War I is the same kind of question that one has to ask about the inculcation of Western ideas on politics in Middle Eastern schools and universities.

MANGO: *But do you think that what we are facing in the Middle East is really the effect of Western political thought? Or is it a fairly normal conflict between groups with different interests, groups which find very little common ground, which are affected by outside influences—the West, the Soviet Union—and which are much more concerned with their own material prospects than they are with theory? Theories there are in plenty; but theory may well be a cover for something very much more primordial. The American University in Beirut has been called one of "the cradles of Arab Nationalism", and Nationalism is a potent force. But was it Nationalism which created the modern Middle East? Wasn't it, rather, the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire, then the withdrawal of the British Empire, and the creation of the Israeli State and its repercussions—these comings and goings, invasions and counter-invasions, intrusions and departures, and their effect on territory, on the distribution of people, on the power of groups—which were more important than the ideas you have been emphasising?*

KEDOURIE: Certainly there are all kinds of groups with traditional attitudes, hatreds and fears of one another, and this is now coming to the surface. But, to my mind, the influence of "theory", as you call it, is that it has made these existing, or latent, or even manifest conflicts more embittered, much more difficult to compromise, because belief in a particular theory has meant that frenzied people would go to the very end in order to realise the vision embodied in the theory.

MANGO: *And yet the most spectacularly potent theory which we've seen at work recently—and the assassination of Dr Malcolm Kerr was your starting point—is in a way the oldest theory. Aren't the Shi'ite assassins and terrorists of today the direct lineal descendants of the* **Assassins**, *the Ismaili Assassins of the Middle Ages? They are not moved by any new-fangled political theory; they are moved by the most elemental medieval forces—what we used to call "Religious Fanaticism." In our more ecumenical mood nowadays, we don't use the word "fanaticism"; so let's call it* **zeal**.

KEDOURIE: The Ismailis were a very small sect; they certainly did not control a whole country, and their notions were not accepted by very large numbers of people. They were, and remained, a very small group. But this modern theory—which I suspect does have similarities with the kind of notions inculcated by the leaders of the Assassins—does not have an Ismaili inspiration. It has a European inspiration, and that is why one has to mention Europe and the effect of Western notions about what can be gained from politics, and the possibility of salvation through politics. It is this which exacerbates the existing conflicts and the existing hatreds.

I DON'T DENY *the importance of these European theories, at least not totally. But I would say that more important than the importation of European ideas or ideologies has been the arrival in the Middle East (and in other parts of the Third World) of lethal Western arms. After all, the Assassin normally killed by using a dagger, and killed one person at a time. The modern Shi'ite extremist, with his trucks packed with explosives, can kill hundreds in one blow. And it's not just trucks full of explosives; there's the spectre of kamikaze planes, of destruction on a very much larger scale. We've already had the bombardment of East Beirut, and now of West Beirut. The ability of people with a largely medieval mentality to destroy their opponents wholesale has introduced a qualitative change into the situation.*

KEDOURIE: Again, I agree. But, if what you say is true, there seems to be no reason why one area of the Middle East after another should not be subjected to the same kind of destruction. After all, these hatreds and conflicts exist everywhere in the Middle East, and there seems no possibility of anyone, any power, restraining these violent local forces. And this is what is so sinister: that one cannot see how any individual or any state, inside or outside the area, can either by power or by policy exercise a restraining influence and say, "Stop! This is the order that I want!"—and make that decision stick.

MANGO: *I don't agree—I don't believe it is a totally new situation. In the last decades of the British Empire, one term recurred constantly. It consisted of three words: "an agreed solution." British policy, certainly in the closing years of the Empire, did not take many initiatives, or seek to impose settlements. British policy existed, it was said, in order to assist parties locked in conflict to arrive at "an agreed solution," and to create the conditions within which that solution would be found. Now, in most cases no agreed solution was found. I'm not even sure if diplomats believed in it; but let us say they did believe. But what actually happened was quite different.*

For example, after the end of World War I the Greeks and the Turks were locked in battle in Anatolia, the Greeks having landed there with a large degree of support from the victorious Allies. No agreed solution was found. The Turks defeated the Greeks, and that result was accepted by Britain and the other Allies. There was no agreed solution in Palestine, where it was apparently sought for a long time—Palestine was partitioned.

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There was no agreed solution in India—India was also partitioned. There was no agreed solution in Cyprus—Cyprus was partitioned: much later, but that was the end result of all the conferences on Cyprus.

What I'm suggesting is that in all these past problems it wasn't ideas that mattered. Western policy mattered, but Western policy did not impose decisions. It provided some sort of framework, usually a very weak one, within which local forces battled it out and one of them won. When President Reagan speaks of creating a "broadly-based and representative Lebanese Government", of achieving conditions of stability in which American aid could be resumed, those "agreed solutions" once again come to mind; and I feel we are back where we were with the dissolution of the British Empire—in the end we're seeing the local forces asserting themselves, finding their own level, and creating a situation which we will have to evaluate at some time in the future.

KEDOURIE: Yes, "an agreed solution" is an execrable joke, and one which is repeated again and again. In the absence of countervailing power, the absence of a power which can impose itself, these conflicts can go on and on; and there seems to be no reason why they should ever stop. This is the case in the Lebanon, and in the Arab-Israeli conflict. So the fact that there is no outside power which can impose order means that no order is possible, for there is no indigenous source of order.

MANGO: *In Eastern Europe, let alone in Western Europe, centuries of warfare have produced an order. Why can't you foresee a situation in the Middle East where an order—in which there will be victors and vanquished, not necessarily a just order or one which satisfies everybody—will hold, and will produce material conditions within which the population of the region can live reasonably calm lives and possibly achieve well-being and prosperity? Consider Turkey, not so long ago. There have been wars in Turkey, civil commotion after the creation of the Turkish State; but one cannot say there is no prospect of a solution to the basic problem of law and order and of creating a stable society. The framework of law and order does exist in Turkey. Why exclude the establishment of stability—perhaps not one to our liking, but* **some** *sort of stability—in the Middle East?*

KEDOURIE: One can never exclude any such outcome, but in the present circumstances I do not see where such a stability is to come from. For centuries on end, stability in Eastern Europe depended on the existence of large Powers which could impose their own order and strive to live as amicably as possible with their neighbours. If a state of peace could not endure, then occasionally they found themselves at war; but these were essentially limited wars which would end in compromise, in some kind of settlement which might last for the time being. Again, in Western Europe the European Powers had some notion of a society of states whose members could certainly be involved in conflicts but could also live side by side with one another in some form of "international order." Now this kind of notion about "international order" in a society of states is entirely missing in the Middle Eastern tradition. In the Middle East there has to be an overlord; if there isn't, the thing is not workable. The notion of a society of Middle Eastern States, the notion of a balance-of-power between and among these States, simply doesn't exist.

DOES ONE NEED *a balance of power, or can small states and large states co-exist more or less peacefully? I'll return to my Turkish example. The scenes that took place in February when West Beirut was captured by "Moslem Militias" (as they were called) reminded me—to some extent; there are differences—of the scenes in Izmir in 1922. There, too, there were Allied fleets, cruising off the Turkish coast as the Turkish troops entered the city, having vanquished the Greeks. There was an exodus of the population; the city was largely destroyed; Allied plans were frustrated. And yet out of that destruction a new order was born (though certainly not one to the satisfaction of the Greeks). Might not what we see in Lebanon today be simply the destruction of Maronite ascendancy from which a new order, in which the Maronites have a smaller place or no place at all, will emerge?*

KEDOURIE: Perhaps; but the Turkish situation is, I think, exceptional in that there was a Turkish ruling class, and it was the heir of long centuries of Ottoman dominion. It was a ruling class which had a notion of political order and could enforce that notion; it could also rely on a population which was on the whole passive and willing to be guided by its rulers. This is the first point.

The second difference from the rest of the Middle East is the Greeks. The Greeks were massacred and evicted from Izmir, and Izmir today is a wholly Turkish city. The Greeks had somewhere to go—they went to Greece. But where are the Maronites to go? Where are the Druze to go, if the Maronites get the upper hand? And there are similar situations all over the Middle East. Again, outside Turkey there isn't that kind of traditional ruling class which can impose its order (or its view of order) on a population. These populations are no longer passive; they have been—how shall I put it?—indoctrinated. Indoctrinated by governments, indoctrinated by media, indoctrinated and made activist by what they hear and see all around them.

MANGO: *Where are the Maronites to go? I wouldn't like to see it, but it is conceivable that they will emigrate to the "New World"; they might simply have to leave the Lebanon. But it hasn't come to that, of course. And where are the Druze to go? Groups of population have disappeared, or been absorbed, or been dispersed in the past. I agree that the Arab Middle East today does look very much like stains of oil on a glass slide—coalescing, splitting up again, unable to form any pattern at all. But behind that appearance there may be the very unpleasant process—in the sense of the suffering it causes people—of "homogenisation": that in fact some groups are being defeated, being relegated to the margin of the state, and others are becoming dominant. In the Lebanon, of course, one prime example of that has been the growth in the power of the formerly despised Shi'ites, the peasants of the South. The idea of the Shi'ites occupying "Westernised, civilised West Beirut" would have*

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been inconceivable some time ago. Now they have become an important element, even if they never dominate a new homogenised population.

Perhaps the main difference between Turkey and the Arab Middle East is that a Turkish Nation is more easily definable within its territory; somehow one knows where it starts, more or less, and where it ends. Whereas an Arab Nation is perhaps still only a fiction, existing only in theory; and the travail needed to produce—or to fail to produce—an Arab Nation is what creates instability in the Middle East.

THESE ARE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES which have to be kept in mind if one is to try and make sense, in some fashion, of what is going on now in the Lebanon and elsewhere. How successful is any attempt by the media (and it is only the media who can attempt it) to convey a sense of the complexity of the potential disasters which lie lurking in this area? The media have two tasks: to present what they see, to give an account of what is going on around them; and to try and give some kind of appreciation of the meaning of what they see. Though reporting of what goes on is, on the whole, vivid and well done, the analysis seems to fall woefully below what is required. Why do you suppose this is?

MANGO: *Basically because this is an alien environment, to which the Western media bring their own domestic preoccupations. I am not speaking, of course, of Eastern media, which only print what the rulers want them to print, or portray, or convey—the indigenous media which serve the defined purposes of those who control them. But as far as the independent and prestigious Western media are concerned, one problem is that they are bred in the adversarial tradition of "the Fourth Estate", the power that questions the Establishment. Their attitude to those in power stems, I think, from the Romantic tradition. To some extent, every Western journalist worth his salt is a descendant of Byron lambasting Lord Castlereagh. They feel they are there to expose the deceits of the rulers, to make sure at least that those in power do not get away with untruths. And of course in the Middle East, where Western governments have been trying (and failing) to impose some sort of order, the media have concentrated on the inability to impose that order. They have put the worst possible construction on the motives of those governments, they have criticised them throughout the operation, and they have selected those facts—or those appearances—which strengthen their general anti-Establishment stance. As far as the media are concerned, the Lebanon is a continuation of Nicaragua, or Viet Nam, or a variety of other areas of conflict where the West has tried—and failed—to impose its views. Reporters and TV-cameramen arrive, and say that this is a forlorn and possibly (in the minds of some of the journalists concerned) an immoral enterprise.*

KEDOURIE: If this is so, then the media are failing in their duty, which is to convey objectively and dispassionately to readers, listeners, and viewers what is going on in the world. I was very struck recently by the reports of the *coup d'état* in Nigeria. The whole of the press, radio, and so on, was full of details of the corruption that had existed in Nigeria under the Constitution, stories of rigged elections, etc., etc. Probably all these stories were true; but what struck me was that when this so-called "constitutional order" existed in Nigeria—elections, a president, a parliament, an independent press—we saw and heard very little about Nigerian corruption. At the time of the recent Nigerian elections nobody said that they were rigged; and nobody, although it was familiar to experts, reported the scale of corruption. Today—rightly—there is great indignation about attempts by UNESCO to create what is called a "New Information Order" which would be a fetter on uncensored reporting from Third World countries. The fetters are there *now*; but they are self-imposed fetters, and result in the same kind of misinformation, giving a misleading picture of the outside world, which a Western-subsidised "New Information Order" will simply organise and make more uniform and more prevalent.

MANGO: *Perhaps we should distinguish between superficiality (and reporting of Africa is perhaps one example of superficiality) and misconstrued or wrong interpretations. In Africa there aren't many Western journalists around. When they do go there (and they go rarely), they see the appearances, they report on the appearances, and they usually draw unwarranted conclusions. But in the Middle East there are droves of Western journalists. Factual reporting is fairly full: one gets to know, for the most part, what is physically happening—who is actually firing what guns, who is being shot at, bombed, or massacred. The bias and distortion tend to occur in the commentary and interpretation, and stem from the tendency of reporters to see a foreign journalistic assignment as part of a campaign to prove the fallibility of their own rulers in Washington, or elsewhere—to see the fall of West Beirut in the light of the fall of Saigon. This certainly dramatises the story. But the story is not only dramatised; it is also ideologised in an attempt to draw "moral" or "idealistic" conclusions, and very often wrong and irrelevant ones.*

KEDOURIE: To me it seems less an attempt to draw moral conclusions, and more like an unprofessional campaign to sit in judgment and indict officials and ministers and the powers-that-be. They are, in effect, trying to act as a kind of universal judge. This is the kind of pretension which in history is associated with figures such as Innocent III, Boniface VIII, and the like. We know what happened to these historic claims to sit in constant, relentless judgment over everybody. I don't think this is a stance which can be sustained by our Fourth Estate. The more the attempt is made by what is called "investigative journalism" to sit in judgment on governments and on politicians, the more public suspicion and popular dislike are likely to be aroused. The situation in this respect is much more extreme in the United States than in Britain; but here, too, the same kind of arrogance and presumption and the same kind of reaction to these pretensions are more and more to be seen. And there is another element which goes hand in hand with this attempt to "rush to judgment" on the world and on the behaviour of governments. This involves the political passions; it involves "taking sides", assuming that one particular faction or ethnic group is much more worthy (or

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enlightened, or "progressive") than the others, and that therefore all energies should be bent to supporting that particular side.

I was interested to see in the recent Fleet Street memoirs by Harold Evans a reference to some journalist on *The Times* who, as a demonstration of sympathy, put up a PLO poster in his office. This seems to me to go clean against what journalists should stand for. What they should really stand for is again encapsulated for me in some lines of Yeats's which are worth quoting because once more he seems to go to the heart of the matter on political issues. He is not speaking here about journalists, but it is fully applicable to journalists and ought to be their motto:

> *Bound neither to Cause nor to State,*
> *Neither to slaves that were spat on,*
> *Nor to the tyrants that spat.*

Both tyrants and slaves should be scrutinised by journalists with an equally cold eye.

MANGO: *They should be, but journalists are human and have views of their own: some are often very silly, but sometimes—rarely—they are wise. The point is that the media irritate, and perhaps it's right that they should. By "muck-racking", by continuing the ceaseless campaign of questioning their own governments, they may stop their governments "getting away with murder" (as the phrase has it) or doing other unsound things in the long run. I don't think the danger lies here.*

The danger lies very much more in the fact that this ceaseless criticism is inhibiting all action. Just now, this to some extent necessary, but irritating and dangerous attitude of journalists is particularly to the fore because we have conservative governments (with a small c) in the United States and in a number of European countries—in Britain, in West Germany. These are governments which would in any case be the butt of journalistic criticism. What is more, these governments are assured of a certain stability—at least, they seem to be in place for the foreseeable future. So journalists can, in the last analysis, feel safe in allowing themselves a greater degree of licence to criticise—in the confident knowledge that Nanny will still be there to protect them. And it is, of course, the very government which they criticise so sharply that they expect still to be there to protect them and save the situation if they were ever to go "too far"—if, through their media-bravura, trouble were to increase dangerously. As Hilaire Belloc put it in one of his "Cautionary Tales", they

> *. . . . always keep a hold of Nurse*
> *For fear of finding something worse.*

Their skins can be saved; but what of the situation they leave behind?

Defying Gravity

I can scarcely bid you good-bye,
even in a letter. I always made
an awkward bow. God bless you!

JOHN KEATS

Between the decorous lips
of *Henry James in Cambridge*
a book-mark lolls like a tongue
unstrung, still trying to say
something:
Remember that day
when you, too, come to take leave;
remember reading aloud
to her, as she darned your sleeve;
remember the hands and how,
defying gravity, she rose—
"Let's leave Henry James for now"—
bending her head to receive
the last but one kiss on her brow;
making, lest you should grieve
at the curtains' perceptible close,
an imperceptible bow.

Jon Stallworthy

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James Lasdun

Jumping

He meets you at the zoo. You stand and watch
The mossy, boulder-headed bison hump
Their buttressed tonnage round a patch of dust,
A cayman's eyelid flash its mineral sump,
Flamingoes, sea-shell pink, curled up asleep
On cocktail stems of leg, a cheetah pick
The last pink shred of membrane from a bone,
Insect analogies of leaf and stick. . . .
A brochure of solutions—every feature
Fashioned like serrations on a key
To prise existence from a precise world
As far from here as yours is. What you see
Mirrors in wing and tusk, night-eyes, webbed feet,
Your own precise and private arsenal
For getting by—each weapon obsolete.

So you permit him to walk you home,
Assenting as he hovers at the door,
As if assent were all you had to lock
What happens now with what has gone before—
This ice-thin plateau of the present, poised
Like crystal on a juggler's column—
Miracles of balance hold you here,
Tremulous, a stranger in your room
Eyeing the bed, the map pinned on the wall—
He makes a tease of searching for your town—
His fingers brush Alaska, skim the Yukon,
Rockies, *warmer warmer*, plunging down
Nebraska, Oklahoma, *further south*,
Tracing the Mississippi, *hot that's hot*,
Vicksburg, Louisiana, the hot mouth. . . .

Then by and by your moon-lit bodies sprawl
Entangled. You're asleep but not at rest,
Flushed hot and cold, an ember's red-black shimmer,
Your face a frown, twitching on his breast—
Wherever you are you're not here;
That muscle quivering in your hip
Is fear of heights—you're balanced on a ledge,
And miles beneath you, willing you to slip,
Behemoth, Cockatrice, misshapen hybrid
Slavering in shadow; the day's nightmare
Spawn of beast on reptile, bird on fish—
And then you jump, and crashing through the air
Towards you comes the creature of your dream,
Its double head familiar . . . one is yours,
The other's watching as you wake, and scream.

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EUROPEAN DIARY

François Bondy

Words, Phrases, Conceits

Zurich

ABCDEFGHI
abcdefghij

IF IN THE BEGINNING was the word, then we have known from time immemorial that words can confuse and deceive, that language can enlighten but can also darken meanings. Words are there to carry ideas, but only in small part: they also serve to bear the burden of needs, moods, purposes, tactics. Orwell's famous essay dealt only with the political confusions of the English language; all the other European tongues similarly tend to lose themselves in a Babel of false formulas and pseudo-concepts. My notebook is crowded with examples, but here are only three: the first one is obvious, but the other two are controversial and arguable although the phrase-mongers, as is their wont, are rarely self-conscious about the semantic difficulties.

Consider "People's Democracy . . . Neo-conservative . . . Late capitalist . . . or (in Marxianised German) '*spätbürgerlich*' . . . ."

The other day in the liberal-left Hamburg weekly, *Die Zeit*, I was astonished to read that Michelangelo Buonarroti, no less, wished for nothing more for the fine city of Florence than that it should become a "*Volksdemokratie*." Letters to the Editor poured in, and I suspect that common sense prevailed in the end. But even the critics did not seem to be quite aware that "*Volksdemokratie*", or People's Democracy, is a post-War post-1945 formulation; and that it suggests really not more democracy but less; in fact the verbal non-sense is calculated to disguise the absence of democracy altogether. Whatever Michelangelo's politics might have been he was certainly not oblivious to the meanings and non-meanings of words. Our well-wisher for old Florence from new Hamburg was surely aware that "*demos*" means people, and that a People's Democracy is something akin to, say, a "pacifistic peace movement." Perhaps there is here an ideological lesson somewhere.

In those Cold War years of Stalin's political offensive, "People's Democracy" was the name given to those systems in which an East European Communist Party, running badly behind in the last free elections, claimed hegemony and seized total governmental power (although a few other "bourgeois" or "peasant" parties were allowed to function as a façade). This is the story of the theory and practice of the term, and to take it in any other sense—much less put it into the mouth of Renaissance Italians—is grotesque. It is the kind of anachronism that Hollywood studios used to go in for when they had a worried Caesar using his zippo to light up a cigarette and steady his nerves for the Ides of March.

Words, needless to repeat, have always been used as weapons, and in the battles over the emergence of the "Neo-Conservative movement" there have been noisy clashes of verbal sword-play. Essentially it should refer to the group of American intellectuals who have so identified themselves. The designation, on the part of both proponents and opponents, is usually fairly precise. One can be for them or against them, but the important thing is to know what (and whom) we're talking about, for what they have been up to is argument and criticism, and not some form of mystical hocus-pocus which seeks to destroy Reason in the name of Higher Values. There are sentimental Americans who want, for example, to put the "Creationism" of Genesis at the centre of science education in the US schools—and they are traditional conservatives, or religious reactionaries, or old-fashioned members of the "New Right" . . . but they are not "neo-conservative."

When such semantical matters cross the Atlantic, chaos has come again. I have just been reading a short 5-page article in that estimable Munich review, *Merkur*, and in Professor Hans Mommsen's text a curious thing has happened on the way to the political forum. For him "neo-conservative" (he uses it 10 times) is the term for certain German tendencies which in the Weimar Republic prepared the way for Adolf Hitler (even if he was not personally liked in such circles). I very much doubt whether, for instance, Oswald Spengler ever thought of himself as a neo-conservative, and the whole stylistic misdemeanour is really a most unfortunate attempt to write history in a way that becomes more "relevant" or "meaningful", and that means crowding every page with such modish vocabulary. What a futile exercise! Anachronisms are not always accidental or thoughtless but sometimes are earnest, if mistaken, attempts to "get it right." I remember reading in some popular English translations of the ancient classics of how Greeks would "turn tail" in the face of the enemy, and Roman conspirators would be "ratting" on Caesar. Ideological slang is no better.

As for "*spätbürgerlich*", it is heard everywhere in German-language areas today, ever since Dr Marcuse in his late-late-show of neo-Marxism popularised the dramatic idea of a dying "late-capitalism." It is, in my view, something of a joke, but not enough people are laughing. Still, what comical figures these neo-Marxist prophets cut as they pretend to be able to judge our own era from some sovereign standpoint in the revealed new future! There is a slick bit of legerdemain at work here, not unlike that in one of Victor Hugo's dramas when he refers to himself as "a medieval knight", *nous autres chevaliers du Moyen Age*. The phrase about being "late bourgeois", or a dying disappearing element of a doomed capitalist world, depends on the presumed certainty of being in tune with the logic of history, with the shape of things to come, with the inevitabilities of revolutionary social change. I wonder if Solzhenitsyn was ever tempted to call Brezhnev or Andropov or Chernenko the last of the "late-Soviet" leadership. Probably not, for the very phraseological turn would seem to have come from Lenin. His book on Imperialism was called *The Last Stage of Capitalism*, and for some ideological movements it still remains the basic prophetic text. If you are convinced

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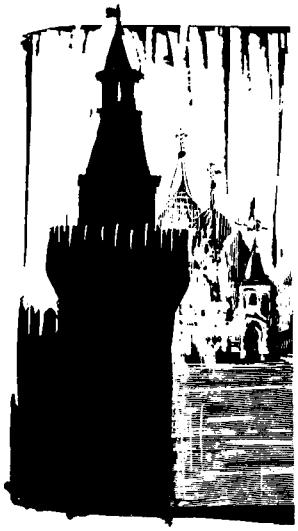
you have the key to the melodrama of history, all the world's a last stage.

Only the timing has gone wrong, and the curtain hasn't fallen. Empires may have been lost and colonies abandoned, but the *bourgeois* and his ill-starred class, the *bourgeoisie*, are still very much around, and mostly thriving. The finality of the "last act" has been a little late in coming. The stern teachers of our day will give history a demerit for being so tardy.

Of the Once & Future Leader

Vienna



NOTHING FAILS like success, as the recent succession crises in the Kremlin indicate. No sooner is the problem of a paralysed leadership, due to age, illness, and absence of the all-powerful Chairman, resolved than the same situation recurs: as Marx might have said, the first time as tragico-farce, and the second time as tragico-farce. The grisly joke in Moscow has it that tickets to the official mausoleum are falling off; mourners in black are waiting to get season-passes. . . .

For all the vaunted triumphs of Western Kremlinology (and the late Franz Borkenau uncannily "predicted" Stalin's death a week before it was officially announced), it rarely reckoned with the geriatric laws of biology. Party doctrine was microscopically examined, the relationships between political factions and social structures were X-rayed. Recondite expertise flourished; but when the old leader died the shape of things to come remained shrouded in darkness. Perhaps only one thing was sure: if the new man ever succeeded in speaking a foreign language (preferably English) . . . in the event that he ever read a Western book (a novel, or better still a detective story) . . . or, of a weary evening in his *dacha* he ever put on a bit of lively jazz (swing? a musical?) . . . then we could be sure that the European and American press would breathe long and loud sighs of relief—*détente* was coming again, agreements would soon be signed, peace was on the march.

If this is the best that our investigative journalism can come up with, then perhaps we should turn to these profounder students of "succession crises", those specialised historians who have studied the deaths of medieval Kings and Renaissance popes. For one thing that has struck me about the Soviet "monarchical" line of "infallible" successors is that they do not succeed to each other but only to the great thaumaturgical founder, to Lenin. And, in turn, what is striking about the relationship to Lenin is the peculiar pseudo-religious complex the Russian Bolsheviks have about political mortality. Death remains a puzzlement. Marxian philosophers have tried to cope with "existentialist accidents", Chairman Mao devised a notion of "revolutionary immortality." In any case (as I learn from Nina Tumarkin's Harvard study of "the Lenin Cult"), a special Party Commission tried to deal with Vladimir Iliich's "mortal defection" with special rules and regulations of the embalming process and, subsequently, the public exhibition of the body (in living colour). The point of it was, as the Commission explained, that "our consciousness must slowly accustom itself to the fact that Lenin is no longer among us. . . ." A real living defector was Lenin's widow, Krupskaya, who was outraged by the fetishism of the corpse, and is supposed never to have visited the mausoleum.

Stalin, to be sure, had a "cult" of his own, but it always seemed to stand neck-to-neck and nose-to-nose with Lenin's—as both figured on plaques, posters, and pictures with the originals, Marx & Engels. Stalin may have been fourth in the line, but then (as his henchmen let it be known, especially to gullible Western visitors) he was a most modest man.

Between Malenkov and Khrushchev fell a shadow, and in the darkness not only Malenkov but also Stalin disappeared, putting Nikita in the direct line of succession and descent. No better or more precise word for it has been found than "non-Stalinism"; and the so-called era of liberalisation was introduced very discreetly (except for the indiscretion of the CIA's getting hold of the "Secret Speech" of the XXth Congress). Nobody dared to move forward to something new, but then nobody risked going back to the old ways. No new show trials took place, and there was no purge or liquidation of old comrades who had somehow gone astray. Nor would there ever be another Stalin again, he who had destroyed so many of his loyal friends and comrades. No, the *Nomenklatura* would look after its own most protectively.

But, then, how do you get from one leader to another if the principle of the *Chistka* is no longer orthodox and the heresy of death persists in intervening? Perhaps the problem could be solved by seeing to it that each new leader is older than the one before. One runs up against biological limits and complications here; but nothing would seem to haunt autocrats with a neurosis about age and mortality more than the spectre of youth. A younger generation has to be sedulously excluded.

A certain political price has to be paid for this, of course; and so it was that when younger men emerged out of the Party ranks of the educated, scientists and soldiers and writers among them (like Solzhenitzyn and Sakharov, Sinyavsky and Grigorenko, Lyubimov and Aksyonov), they were not dealt with as in the past. In the first place, they happened to be genuine dissenters and régime-critics (and not "innocents" forced to recant or "confess"); and, in the second place, they were not killed or condemned to die in Siberia, but at worst "treated" in a "psychiatric" ward, and at best sent to suffer the fleshpots of Western exile.

Through all of this a new, imperious party rule survived and it is reminiscent of the practices of the late Roman Empire which knew in its august political worship only the "living gods." Lenin, obviously, remains the one exception. Malenkov continues as an unmentionable. Khrushchev has still not re-won his biographical entry in the official Soviet *Encylopaedia*: once his every word filled millions of pages, hundreds of books;

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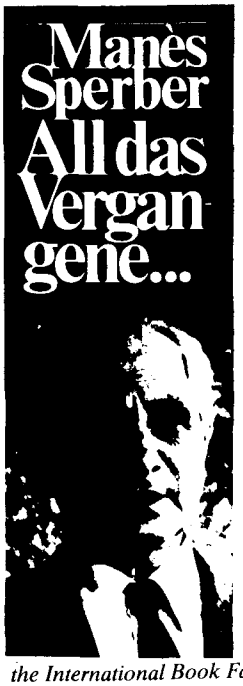

HIS LAST INTERVIEW *appeared in the pages of* ENCOUNTER *(February) in the month of his death here in Paris at the age of 78. It showed him, even at the end, at his thoughtful, polemical best. It was as if he were trying to get across the final messages of his generation of friends and indeed comrades: Aron, Koestler, Silone, Malraux. In Frakfurt at the Paulskirche he had been awarded the esteemed "Peace Prize" of the International Book Fair, and he used the platform (although he was already too ill to read the speech himself) for a fiery critique of the Peace Movement which stunned the German audience, used to rather more tentative and guilt-ridden arguments on this subject. A nation-wide controversy broke out, and his name became familiar to a vast audience who had only vaguely heard of his novels, essays, memoirs.*

Still, it was a peculiar turn of fate that the East European émigré who lived for some 40 years in Paris as an homme de lettres *should have found post-War Germany the most fruitful ground for his impassioned views. Even as a militant anti-Communist, in the way that perhaps only an ex-Communist could be, he maintained an extraordinary rapport with young Left-wing Germans. They may have hated other "cold warriors" but they found in Sperber an Adlerian psychologist who understood something of individual "life-styles" and thus possibly saw in him a sympathetic friend for the lost '68 generation whose slogans, trends and indeed "gods" had all failed. The visitors to Sperber's flat in the Champs de Mars included Wolf Biermann and Danny Cohn-Bendit, among others seeking, hesitantly, some new ideological path.*

NO, HE WAS REALLY *a living refutation of the notion—once launched by Isaac Deutscher—that the Communist who breaks with the Party becomes a "renegade" and betrays in his style and temperament all the narrow fanatical qualities of his previous ideological career. Silone was another luminous spirit who moved, not from one "Party Line" to another, but from extremism to moderation and balance, from intolerance to a generous open-mindedness, from a tense radical combativeness to a caring humane gentleness. Even in the field of abstract ideas there was little propagandistic one-sidedness; and, in the case of Sperber, an undogmatic attitude to Marx's work and the uses (if limited) of Marxism.*

HE WAS *as a speaker a man of a certain pathos, mixed with an earnest eloquence; but as a writer, especially in the three volumes of his autobiography, his person took on wit and comedy as he sketched the adventures of a frail Galician ghetto boy, wearing a funny little crooked cap, in the disintegrating world of the Habsburg Empire. Later on, to be sure, we are dealing with quite another milieu, the "rootless cosmopolitans" of an émigré-crowded Left Bank, making contacts with the likes of André Malraux and André Gide. The sense of the grotesque was still there, as the ill-fed Sperber, sipping a fine cognac as a guest in the Rue Vaneau, falls asleep during a conversation with Gide. And from those long nights in Moscow, arguing about Bolshevism and the coming revolution (his trilogy has been called "the saga of the Comintern"), he still remembers the "accompanying music" to the chit-chat of the comrades: the desperate scratching of bad matches against useless match-boxes in order to light up a lousy* machorka *cigarette. . . . The charm and popularity of his various books of essays owed something to this same quality: peppering theses of intellectual abstraction with vignettes sketched by a novelist's pen. It was, if you will, a "Habsburgian" quality which marked the work of many a famous Austrian writer, and Sperber could talk at length about the profound depths of a Robert Musil in contrast to the inventive narrative genius of a Joseph Roth.*

The "Parisian" influences, even after half-a-lifetime on the Seine, were less conspicuous, if present or discernible at all. He could be as engaged and as public-spirited as the most committed of Left Bank avant-gardistes, but he felt somewhat estranged by a certain element of Gallic vanity and playfulness. We remember his impatience with some of the "nouveaux philosophes" who, as he remarked, could not speak of missiles and masses without quoting Racine and Marcel Proust. In his political mode, usually in the cause of "human rights" (especially, imprisoned writers), he was always single-minded, for the message was . . . the message: straightforward and unadorned. That quality of direct simplicity still remains attached to the draft of "The Manifesto of Freedom" (1950) which Koestler asked him to write and then reworked a bit (for the text see the reprint in ENCOUNTER, *July–August 1983).*

It gave him, and not only during the last decade of his life when he became a kind of silver-haired guru for many, a special aura of sincerity or of "good-will" which enabled errant young ideologues, with whom he might ordinarily have lost his temper, to find in him a patient, trusting soul.

If he remained a militant moralist and a political educator, it still caught the essence of the man when the "Frankfurter's" obituary (a moving piece by Marcel Reich-Ranicki) was headlined: **Der poetische Lehrmeister**, *or "the poetical mentor."*

AS IN HIS BOOK *on Adler's psychology, and indeed in his epic novels and in his critique of totalitarianism, he was obsessed with the idea (and reality) of "the individual." Few of that idea-fixed European generation of ideologues and theoreticians could interrupt and divert a heavy intellectual session, as he so often did, with a series of pointed questions about wives, children, lovers "the individual person in himself."*

So it was that in the final conflict—Sperber versus the cant of the peace-fighters, whom he accused of being blind to the foreign-policy dangers of the 1980s as they once were in the 1930s—he had a kind of extraordinary immunity on the Left. Anybody else would have been excommunicated from the ranks of the decent, forward-looking, progressive intelligentsia. But, although they obviously disagreed with him, Henrich Böll and Günter Grass rallied to his side in a rare burst of solidarity with "Andersdenkende", with those who think differently. He had a memorable capacity, here and on many other occasions, of being able to suspend the "Freund-Feind" syndrome: to bring together, even if only for a brief tense moment, friends and enemies. There was, for him, an inviolable ethics of intellectual decency; and in his integrity he communicated it infectiously to others. He not only believed in dialogue, he exemplified it; and in recent months on German television there were at least a dozen re-broadcasts of several long conversations between Sperber and his friend, the novelist Siegfried Lenz. Something more than brilliant exchanges, earnest warnings, and flashing ripostes made for a great and lingering impression. It was (at the risk of using a much-abused concept) "authenticity."

Here was the last of a great European generation of witnesses.

M.J.L./F.B.

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today not fifty column-lines can be spared for the man who was deviant enough to die quietly.

It could be that Brezhnev's biggest mistake of his life was to continue the cult of Lenin's death. Like Khrushchev he never summoned up the spirit of Stalin, but on the occasion of Lenin's hundredth birthday (some 46 years after he "no longer was amongst us") there were flamboyant exercises in the new fetishism, under the million-bannered slogan that "*Lenin is more alive than many who still live. . . !* " Nobody proved to be more dead than Brezhnev when he was no longer amongst his comrades. After his burial his name, too, went to ground. The ubiquitous bits of wisdom from the Leader were no longer his but Andropov's. Nothing, surely, is as short-lived as a Soviet dictionary of quotations.

Now, again (as in those farcical repetitions which so amused Karl Marx as he contemplated Napoleonic successions and monarchical electors), Chernenko is the single source of quotable eloquence. Lenin has found yet another direct descendant. Every reign becomes for the successor an interregnum, peopled obscurely by unmentionable regents, with no names worth remembering. Between the embalmed founder of all good things and the true fulfilment of his succession falls a shadow, a nothingness.

History, then, becomes empty and without meaning; and it is only natural that some of the dissidents (Roy Medvedev, for example, and Solzhenitsyn above all) have been hoping to find some sources of renewal in efforts to salvage the past. Witnesses who can give testimony are to become the great healers of revolutionary amnesia. The spectre which has been haunting Europe is the spectre of the memory hole. The trouble with so-called historical materialism is that it has nothing to do with history: "historic" is only the one-and-only founder, and the one-and-only current living leader.

All the rest are unhistorical unpersons. Orwell would have been amused.

German Illusions

Hamburg

THE FORMER West German Ambassador to East Germany (he was called merely "the Permanent Representative") returned to the scene of the Bonn Republic to write a best-selling book. Ambassador Gaus' solutions to the "National Problem" which he vigorously re-raises are less convincing than his analysis of the German ambiguities and uncertainties hidden within the current acceptance of a divided nation. He senses change and movement, feeling as he does that things cannot (i.e. should not) go on as they have been going. As Günter Gaus puts it, "*Es gibt heute nichts Selbstverständliches in Deutschland*", nothing can be taken as self-evident or as a matter of course any more. . . . Another new book which I have been reading offers fifteen experts on the subject of "the Identity of the Germans", and there are exactly fifteen different little portraits.

The old big picture used to include a vision of a great and traditional German *Vaterland*, with expansive frontiers ("*von der Maas bis an die Memel*"). That era, and its ancient Teutonic longings, is long since gone. The new big picture was one of "*Europa*", and that seems also to be receding into an historical background or being put off to a later time of Continental unities. Diagnosticians have been busy but there seems to be no therapy in sight. Nor is the medical image accidental, for I have been looking at my book-shelf of German political books of the last decade and they seem to me mainly concerned with the German "illness", with weaknesses and shortcomings and painful troubles. Ullstein published a book about *Die Deutsche Neurose*, Mohn's alarm was a "Warning about Germany"; Egon Bahr's cry was "What Will Become of the Germans?"

The "Germany" in all these books seems to be some pathetic creature, a dog constantly snapping at its own tail. If there were space I would try and compare the current crop of books and pamphlets on "the German Question" with those of, say, 30 years ago. The by-lines and titles are different, but I wonder whether many of the realities have really changed, objectively speaking. I think of the speech which Raymond Aron made to German students in Frankfurt in 1950 (I mentioned it recently in my memorial article in the February ENCOUNTER). To read again his remarks is surely to be struck by how apposite they still are. Aron was one of the first of the French-German "bridge-builders", and even during the War warned against yet another "vindictive" peace which would foreclose any future for the German nation. Nevertheless, he told those Frankfurt students—and today they would all be between 50 and 60—that they could not reckon, no matter how painful the recognition might be, on a reunited German state.

Divided Germany was part of the division of Europe, and one would last as long as the other. The diplomacy of Soviet propaganda was not to be taken seriously, and was not so intended:

> "The Soviet power has installed itself, politically and militarily, throughout Eastern and Central Europe, and there is no sign that it is supposed to be temporary. Reunification of Germany assumes 'free elections' in those areas where People's Democracies have been established. Who could imagine that the Soviet leaders would run the risk of losing elections which, in their totalitarian style, they have always managed to win with 99% and better? The German hope and wish for unity is legitimate, and, more than that, natural. We cannot accept the present status of Europe, but at the same time we cannot change it. . . ."

That *status quo* was accepted, if slowly. One recalls all the furore in Germany that was caused by Professor Karl Jaspers' book which called for the acceptance and recognition of two German states, *die Zweistaatlichkeit*. The ethnic or national sense of anomaly remains, but it is not very much relieved by

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the pious sentiment that, surely, one fine day there will be one Germany again. . . .

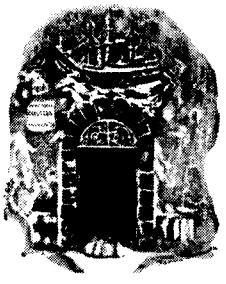
There is, of course, a school of utopian nationalists who, looking back, contend there were post-War diplomatic opportunities that were missed. This might-have-been argument is dismissed in great critical detail by Professor Herman Graml in a study published in the scholarly German historical journal, *Vierteljahrschrifte für Zeitgeschichte*. I doubt whether all the convincing documentation and footnotes will help much. Hard evidence rarely holds out against the onslaught of invincible hope, bitter outrage, or deep illusions. Somehow it all *should* have happened, and can *still* come to pass. . . .

Günter Grass now is to be found in the ranks of the born-again German national hopefuls. In a recently published conversation with Fritz J. Raddatz, Grass is quoted as saying: "I don't believe that for Western Germany there was quite the prospect of an 'Austrian solution', but something like that would have been possible. . . ."

The vagueness of that "something like that" is so vast, who would want to be polemical and pin it down? But that, after more than 30 years, nothing more precise than that can be formulated is proof of Raymond Aron's melancholy prescience all those years ago. For Grass and his friends nothing is more irresistible than an illusion whose time has come. The *Bundesrepublik* is evidently living an existential lie, *eine Existenzlüge*, if it considers itself an independent state rather than a partial, unfinished *Teilstaat*. Nobody really believes that the West German state is "provisional", but will thinking make it so? "Provisional" for decade after decade? with a new and different history of its own, special "national" memories and functioning governmental institutions? Even Günter Grass finds the West German Constitution an excellent document, and he even goes on to consider himself a protector of the constitutional law, *ein Verfassungsschützer*. The German mind becomes curiouser and curiouser—how does a society continue to live under a good and defensible Constitution when its very existence was a mistake and its continuance is a "lie"? I am not sure what ails Germany today, or what precisely pains its intellectuals; but to put one's finger on its "*neurose*" is to touch the point where very strong convictions are joined to very weak logic.

Remembering Wroclaw

Paris



FOR ONE REASON or another I have been prompted to think about that great and notorious "cultural conference" which I attended in Breslau in late August of 1948. I suppose that Wroclaw can, after so many years, be referred to by its old, still familiar German name (after all, the German language is still allowed to call Warsaw *Warschau* and not *Warszawa*). At any rate, some historians of the "Peace Movement" have been looking back to those discussions, as if to find additional pacifistical "roots" in the 1940s.

Yet, as an attempt to rally "the peace-loving" forces of a war-torn Europe, that Breslau conference was a distinct failure. No world-wide inspiration came from the assembly (the subsequent "Stockholm Appeal" was another abortive attempt); and the various international figures—to the extent that they were not already members of the "apparatus"—were very reluctant to get themselves conscripted into an obvious propaganda campaign. More than that, it was early days yet for the Kremlin's "satellite system", and certain differences came to the fore which separated the East Europeans from the down-the-line sloganeering of the Soviet delegates. Then there were the heretical Yugoslavs, and nobody east of Tito's frontiers would fraternise with them; nor indeed with the bourgeois Westerners. I have been looking through the published edition of Max Frisch's Diaries (the volume on 1946–49), and there in his entries was recaptured the whole oppressive atmosphere of the day. There is also a documentary report by Dominique Desanti which, from the Communist side, records the failure on "the cultural front" of Moscow's "peace offensive" to win friends and influence people.

I was also reminded of those days in Breslau at the recent meeting here, a Sorbonne conference on "Science and Peace", at which the Nobel Prize-winning Polish writer, Czeslaw Milosz, reminisced. Milosz was at the time an official Embassy person in Washington, and he was approached by the Breslau conference organiser, one K— Z—, to obtain a message of greeting from Albert Einstein. Einstein obliged. In it he warned against the growing dangers from the Superpowers, of their militarisation, and he pressed for an international agreement on atomic controls. He also added a brief polite note to the conference assembly.

As Milosz recalled, the message from Einstein was not quite militant or orthodox enough for Stalin's *agit-prop* . . . and as a result its contents were kept secret. The perfunctory words of greeting were, however, read out proudly by Julian Huxley, who must have believed that this was all there was. It was typical of those days in Breslau when censorship went hand in glove with defamation. A. J. P. Taylor was provoked into loudly defending himself and, indeed, "the West." T. S. Eliot and Jean-Paul Sartre (then not yet a "peace-fighter" or a fellow-traveller) were both called by the Soviet writer Alexander Fadeyev "hyenas of the typewriter."

NOWADAYS MOSCOW HAS proved itself to be rather more skilful in its Western approaches; and, as we have seen in the recent period, Soviet approval has been dispensed to every kind of "pacifist" movement wherever and whenever it raises its head—to strike a blow against its own native "war machine." A shrewd measure of ideological tolerance, or coexistence, currently informs their anti-war propaganda, as they welcome liberals, disenchanted cold-warriors, churchmen, hippies. In the old Wroclaw days the line was hard and unyielding. Doubtless the Poles in early 1948 were calculating to establish some broad "unity", but when in June the Titoist defection took place there was too much danger in cultivating ambiguities. I remember a few sympathetic West European writers and painters who would happily have gone along with peace, pro-

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gress, and people's democracy; but they happened to work as artists in a style which was far removed from "Socialist Realism"; and they were, accordingly, treated like enemies.

I recall too an outburst from the late Elio Vittorini, at that time one of the leading figures in the new post-War Italian literature and the editor of a fairly open-minded cultural magazine, *Politecnico* (supported by Togliatti's Communist Party). He listened impatiently as one official speaker after another attacked the USA, concentrating their fire on "American racism" and the exploited, oppressed, black masses in the Deep South. "One simply has to say it", Vittorini remarked: "'Culture' is the 'Negro Question' of the Soviet Union." Writers and artists who had been censored and imprisoned, or if you will "exploited and oppressed", knew what he meant. The officials, ultra-sensitive to the slightest ideological deviation in those days, were shocked. I can still see those stony, unsmiling faces before me.

Meanwhile, back in Rome, Togliatti was moving towards cancelling the Party's support for *Politecnico*, and the magazine folded. Today Berlinguer's party might well want to have an intellectual review of that calibre, but the Vittorinis are long since gone.

Not only publications fall by the wayside when there is an abrupt, or unexpected, change of Party line. There may well have been a time when light jokes could have been made on the zig-zag manipulations of the Comintern; and sometime fellow-travellers in New York have occasionally hummed for me, with a bit of ideological nostalgia, the refrain of an old song called *Our Line's Been Changed Again. . .*! Things, most of the time, were more earnest than that. At a recent meeting on the Rhine I ran into a young man who happened to be the son of the Polish organiser of that Wroclaw/Breslau conference all those years ago. He told me that the conference, as an "opening to the West", had been thoroughly prepared—but how was his father to know that the Iron Curtain would suddenly descend on his show, that the line would be changed yet again?

The erring comrade was dealt with severely, and cast into disgrace; he died not long after. One could be grateful, the young man said, that his father had not been subjected, as were neighbouring Czechs and Hungarians, to the fate of monstrous show-trials and hangings. Still, "rehabilitation" would be a kind of decency or a form of compensation. But the Party never forgives others for the injustices it does unto them. Something of the spirit of Wroclaw/Breslau still lives.

At The Open-Air Market

The long-haired huckster fans a stack of plates:
One pouring shuffle, like a waterfall.
Smells of crushed grass, frying onions, crates.
A crowd like driftwood builds against his stall.

Housewives, mostly, ready for a lark.
He gets them going with a tale or two
Then settles to it, looking for a mark.
Beneath the smile his eyes appraise: And you?

Relax, friend. I'm not here to cramp your style.
Purveyors, like consumers, have their rights.
On with the foxy patter; I may smile
But only at a memory that lights

My mind up suddenly, like sun through mist,
Of how you once stole linen from a hedge
In palmy days when young wives could be kissed
Before life set your pugging tooth on edge,

And at another time how plausibly
With what aplomb you preached as you bestowed
Pigs' bones and pardons round the company
In April on the Canterbury road.

David Sutton

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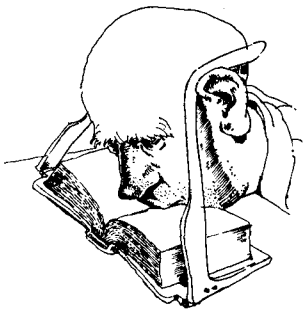
Sex & Personal Identity

The Western Individualistic Tradition—By MARY MIDGLEY



THE SEX DIFFERENCE is not quite like any other difference. Many current intellectual approaches tend to treat it as just one among many differences of power and status. This will not do. Neither bland 18th-century formulas based on equality—on the hope that, foolish prejudice apart, men and women will turn out to be just the same—nor attempts to hijack the Marxist formula of the class struggle, with women playing the part of the proletariat, will fit the case. Power and status do raise real problems. But they could never have done so had there not in the first place been a deeper, much more mysterious difference in kind, making people in all human cultures fall into two groups according to gender. Failure to think about this difference muddles our whole notion of a human being.

The reason why we find it hard to grasp this painfully obvious point is that our moral and political tradition lacks slots for differences in kind. Where it sees difference, it tends to see hierarchy, making divisions into better and worse. This is as true of Left-wing as of Right-wing thinking, and it is the reason why the current attachment of feminism to the Left is getting us nowhere. This is not, of course, to say that attachment to the Right would be better. The crude and confused Left-Right antithesis brackets together sets of policies whose connection can often only be understood by a careful tracing of political history. It can never help us in trying to think about new issues. And an issue which most thinkers in our main tradition have flatly refused to think about at all has to be counted as a new one.

Why do we find it so hard to think about it? The difficulty is not just the natural reluctance of a privileged group to surrender power. If it were only that, all women would find the issue quite simple, and they do not. The wider trouble is that our whole intellectual and social tradition centres at present on the idea of an individual, and that individual is conceived as male. The individualist tradition, being supposedly radical and universal, demands to be extended to females, but is so constructed that it cannot be. The tone of the tradition has always been rationalistic; stark, honest realism is its watchword. But evasion, partiality, and self-deception have always eroded it on this central issue—central not just because it affects half the human race, but because the other half too cannot be thought about honestly in isolation.

It is therefore not surprising that, on the one hand, a great jumble of problems involving women pile up for our attention, brought forward by a great variety of reformers, loosely grouped under the name of feminists. Nor is it surprising, on the other, that many people come to hate the very sound of this name, and will go to great lengths to avoid hearing anything about it. How strong this feeling is I only realised lately when I found how people regarded my working on the topic. Philosophers would ask what I was busy with. The year before the answer was "animals"; everybody glowed and responded. When I said "women", however, people tended to sympathise, as if I had named a disease, and to ask respectfully how I could stand it. My reply was roughly that I like confusions—that I find them interesting, especially when they have practical effects, and even more interesting when they are open and flagrant than when a cover-up job has been attempted. My questioners would then agree gravely that in that case I would not be short of work.

It was clear that they expected all these confusions to belong to the feminists, which indeed a great many of them did. But nobody who has not gone into the question would believe how badly the great philosophers themselves perform on this question. It is not just that some of what they say about women is false, not even that some of it is wicked. What startles is its silliness. When this topic is raised, normal standards of thought collapse. The Enlightenment grows dark, while the Christian Fathers, forgetting love, tend to radiate unthinking hatred. It is no pleasure to me to point this out, for I love the great European philosophic tradition. But this is something plain, something which anthropologists visiting the earth from a gender-free planet would find startling and highly significant. Of all the great European philosophers, only Plato and John Stuart Mill approach this topic as they would any other—questioning dispassionately, and trying to use their normal powers of criticism.

I cannot document this alarming generalisation properly here, though I shall look in a moment at some of those great Enlightenment figures whose muddles on this matter are especially instructive and serious. The point that interests me is of course not to knock the mighty dead, but to notice the

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difficulty which their failure indicates in what might seem to be a simple subject, and did seem so to them. Many scholars, however, do see this move as an attack, and sweep it aside with an historical broom. They argue that the philosophers simply made a mistake which in their day anybody would have made, so that it is as unfair to blame them for it as for their mistakes about the composition of matter or the shape of the universe. Against blame, that is no doubt a good defence. But blame is not the point. The interesting question is "What happens if we now correct that mistake? How much difference will it make to the value of the rest of their thought, and to its bearing on life?"

MISTAKES ABOUT the physical world can often be corrected without much effect on the surrounding thoughts. How do we do this about women? To historical-minded dismissers, the job looks quite simple. We shall just take out one section of conceptual piping and replace it with a more modern one. We drop the old, crude attitude to women and put in instead the enlightened, perfectly satisfactory one which is in use today. This operation, they add, is not really a philosophical one at all, just an application of ready-made philosophy. The ideas themselves are in order, and merely need extending to a new group. A typical case would be a brisk revision of the voting register. Others, equally simple, would follow, such as extending the educational system and making all marriage laws perfectly symmetrical. . . .

Obviously, however, if that were all, we would not be in the muddle we are today. Nor would past sages have done so badly. This is not a case of scientific ignorance, cured by some sudden theoretical discovery which makes everything thereafter straightforward. The main concepts involved were on hand in the 18th century, and were vigorously applied in other areas. Certainly, since then, there has been a great change in attitudes to women. But it has been a slow, confused and halting one, constantly held up by the awkwardness of its conceptual tools. And not only is it still incomplete, but it has reached an impasse where, without a real revision of those basic working concepts—individuality, autonomy, independence, freedom, and the rest—it will jam itself and finally fail.

Let me sum up the matter crudely. The whole idea of a free independent, enquiring, choosing individual, an idea central to European thought, has always been essentially the idea of a male. It was so developed by the Greeks, and still more by the great libertarian movements of the 18th century. In spite of its force and nobility, it contains a deep strain of falsity, not just because the reasons why it was not applied to one half of the human race were not honestly looked at, but because the supposed independence of the male was itself false. It was parasitical, taking for granted the love and service of non-autonomous females (and indeed often of the less enlightened males as well). It pretended to be universal when it was not. This equivocal, unrealistic attitude to the mutual dependence central to human life does not just inconvenience women. It falsifies the whole basis of life. Morality becomes a lop-sided melodrama. The virtues and qualities we need for love and service are uncritically despised, while those involved in self-assertion are uncritically exalted (except when it is women who

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are doing the asserting).

This kind of bad faith is a particularly crippling fault in the sort of extreme individualism which is generally held to belong to the Left—the near-anarchistic strain which descends from Rousseau through Nietzsche to Sartre. Modern feminists, however, have put a lot of confidence in this tradition, and have not subjected Nietzsche to anything like the well-deserved acid-bath which they have given Freud. (Simone de Beauvoir's influence has been powerful here.) On the Right, such thinking is more widely recognised. Indeed, attempts to understand individualism bring out particularly clearly the uselessness of the Right-Left antithesis. Where, on the political spectrum, ought we to place the unspoken creed which runs: "I believe only in the independent individual, to refrain from interfering with whom is the prime duty of all the world, especially of women"? If there is such a spectrum, its ends run round behind and join each other.

On the recognised Right, an interesting specimen is Carlyle. After his wife's death, he told Tyndall heart-brokenly "how loyally and lovingly she had made herself a soft cushion to protect him from the rude collisions of the world." How could someone whose lifelong theme was heroism, and who held great audiences spellbound by his celebrations of it, possibly make such a claim and such an admission? Why did he need his cushion? Carlyle could take this line because he believed devoutly in the romantic cult of the great man or genius, and had no wish to examine that figure suspiciously for feet of clay. In general, too, clashes between ideals never bothered him much, since he thought consistency rather a fiddling consideration. But he also had a real advantage here over many theorists of his time and ours, because he had never claimed to subscribe to the ideals of the French Revolution.

COULD PEOPLE WHO WERE primarily champions of liberty and equality take the same line about women? It might seem hard, but they managed it. The blindness of all the great architects of libertarian thought (until Mill) to this fascinating issue is, I think, a real piece of bad luck, something which could easily have been otherwise. It is certainly not an historical necessity, as it might perhaps be in a culture where such questions had never been raised. Even in Greece, Euripides and Aristophanes had taken the matter seriously. They reflected controversies which were evidently active in their day, and to which Plato responded in the *Republic* by bold arguments and proposals. Aristotle ignored all this, but in doing so he was deliberately turning his back on it, not acting in innocent ignorance. And by the 18th century a good number of upper-class women had for some time been educated. They formed a fair part of the reading public, ran salons which were accepted as important centres for the development of ideas, even wrote influential books. All this, of course, was especially true in France, where lively discussion about their position was common.

This was Rousseau's background. In *The Social Contract*, as we all know, he said that "man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." Rousseau demanded unchainment. Whatever else may be obscure here, we tend to think that we also know who he is talking about—namely, all human beings. We must turn to *Émile*, published at the same time, to discover that he means less than half of them:

> "Girls should early be accustomed to restraint, because all their life long they will have to submit to the strictest and most enduring restraints, those of propriety. . . . They have, or ought to have, little freedom. . . . As a woman's conduct is controlled by public opinion, so is her religion ruled by authority. . . . Unable to judge for themselves, they should accept the judgment of father and husband as that of the church."

So much for liberty; what about equality? Are women, for instance, equally entitled to education? Rousseau replies that they must get only the minimum which will make them useful housekeepers and not intolerably boring housemates. Theorists demanding more than this do not realise the fearful dangers involved: such would-be reformers,

> "not content to secure [women's] rights, lead them to usurp ours, for to make women our superior in all the qualities proper to her sex, and to make her our equal in all the rest, what is this but to transfer to the woman the superiority which nature has given to her husband?"

So wrote the man who owed his career to the devoted, intelligent, educated encouragement of Mesdames de Warens, d'Épinay and others.

Many things contributed to Rousseau's attitude, among them no doubt the resentment of patronage. But it did not flow from ignorance of other possibilities. He was being deliberately reactionary—resisting proposals which in general his whole basic philosophy demanded, yet which he found intolerable. He managed his resistance by simply retreating, when this topic came up, to the older, hierarchical style of thought which he was busy demolishing, and using a corner of it as a refuge.

Since this older style was still familiar, readers who shared his ambivalence on the matter accepted this strange behaviour gladly, and apparently often did not notice it. The ambiguity of terms like "man" made it just possible—though still surprising—that devotees of the rights of man, or of "One Man, One Vote" and similar slogans, should feel themselves to be universal in their sympathies, and yet become angry and derisive whenever women's participation was mentioned. The odd thing is, not that male domination was retained, but that, in so argumentative an age, no need was felt to defend it intelligibly. It was treated as something which need not, and perhaps should not, ever be seriously discussed. Accordingly, as Mill put it:

> "The social subordination of women stands out, an isolated fact in modern social institutions . . . a single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else, but retained in the one thing of most universal interest; as if a gigantic dolmen, or temple of Jupiter Olympius, occupied the site of St Paul's and received daily worship, while the surrounding Christian churches were resorted to only on fasts and festivals."

Women were to remain hierarchical, feudal, emotional, and organic. If they ceased to be so, they would endanger the men's enterprise of becoming totally free, equal, autonomous, intellectual and creative.

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DOLMENS OF THIS SORT are best maintained by not being mentioned. Rousseau's long, explicit, revealing outburst in the fifth book of *Émile* was not widely imitated. Even its admirers may have noticed uneasily the unmistakable smell of spite and panic which it gives off. Apart from Schopenhauer, whose influential *Essay on Women* outdoes Rousseau in all these respects, most serious theorists chose the safer course of pretending that the topic did not exist. Hobbes perhaps takes the palm here, explaining that a family is

> "a little monarchy, whether that family consist of a man and his children, or of a man and his servants, or of a man and his children and servants together."

The word *child* in all serious contexts simply means *boy*, as it does throughout Locke's work on education.

From such books, our alien anthropologists would conclude fairly confidently that women were a small minority—a marginal, outlying, anomalous group, perhaps rather like haemophiliacs or typhoid-carriers, with some peculiarities which called for special social arrangements, but so untypical as not to affect the general shape of society. They would notice that any prolonged reference to them tends to be thought frivolous. In political theory, women are usually only mentioned in clear, sharp directives to keep them out of the central argument. Thus Kant, in the course of an impressive essay to show that political obligation absolutely requires the consent of the governed, so that all citizens must vote, adds briefly that the only qualification required by a citizen, "apart, of course, from being an adult male", is that he must have some property or some skill to support himself.

This is the remark of a philosopher deeply committed in general to the principle of consent, and deeply interested in the different ways of understanding and applying it. He also in general hates unargued dogma, and is most scrupulous about giving some argument, good or bad, for all his conclusions. He is writing some twenty years later than Rousseau, when questions about women were receiving even more attention, and not long before the French Revolution—a revolution which he welcomed. There really is something here which needs explaining.

We can take for granted two obvious pieces of the explanation—the reluctance of the privileged to consider surrendering power, and the unwillingness of celibate scholars such as Kant to think about a factor which they have managed to exclude from their lives. But, in so passionately rationalistic an age, better reasons than these are needed for passing up the whole argument.

And there are such reasons. On the theoretical side, the notion of what an individual is (which was central to these people's rationalism) had something wrong with it—a fault which has since become still more glaring, and which would have had to be acknowledged at once if any attempt had been made to apply it to women. Crudely—and we have to be crude here to bring the matter out into the open—the Enlightenment notion showed the individual as essentially an isolated will, guided by an intelligence, arbitrarily connected to a slightly unsatisfactory array of feelings, and lodged, rather by chance, in an equally unsatisfactory human body. Each individual's relation to all others is optional, arranged by contract. It

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depends on the calculations of the intellect and on aims freely chosen by the will.

Since Kant's time, this picture has become far more extreme, largely through Nietzsche's work in exalting solitude and treating the will as not just the chooser of values, but also their creator. In our own supposedly secular age, this model is not fully recognised as active, but it burgeons unofficially into a startling variety of revealing myths. An interesting set concerns the disconnection of mind from body. This may not seem appropriate to secular rationalism and voluntarism; it is commonly thought of as part of religion. But because the body evidently supplies the basis for the feelings, those who want to exalt intellect and will over feeling also need to make a sharp division here. They draw their model from Descartes, usually now rejecting his view that the soul is immortal, but keeping its independence of the body. That very significant thing science-fiction expresses this myth currently in many forms, reincarnating consciousness in all sorts of alternative bodies, natural or mechanical, and sometimes even dodging death.

Real scientists too are influenced by these notions; indeed, one Dean E. Wooldridge offers to put the scheme into practice. He hopes to extract people's brains and set them up on their own in a situation of increased comfort and dignity, rendering them "ecstatic by arranging for suitable patterns of electric current in selected regions of the brainstem." He warns us only that "a major problem may be the selection of lucky winners from the many who volunteer for disembodiment because of their wish to achieve a happier state of existence than that which is available to them by ordinary means."

Anyone browsing through shelves of science-fiction and popular science can find plenty of similar neo-Cartesian fancies, expressing a horrified distaste for the ordinary unmodified human body which one would normally only expect from someone like Tertullian or St Simeon Stylites. I owe this particular specimen, however, to Brian Easlea, who cites it in his excellent book *Science and Sexual Oppression* (1981), where he also supplies some startling quotations from an apparently very different kind of writer: Sartre. In his exaltation of the will, Sartre also has occasion to disown and denounce physical matter as alien to it, and therefore to our essential being. He describes the material world as "viscous", clinging to us so as to entrap us. The drama appears in *Being and Nothingness* as follows:

> "The For-Itself is suddenly *compromised*. I open my hands, I want to let go of the slimy and it sticks to me, it draws me, it sucks at me. . . . It is a soft, yielding action, a moist and feminine sucking . . . it draws me to it as the bottom of a precipice might draw me. . . . Slime is the revenge of the In-Itself. A sickly-sweet, feminine revenge. . . . The obscenity of the feminine sex is that of everything which 'gapes open.' It is *an appeal to being*, as all holes are. . . . Beyond any doubt her sex is a mouth and a voracious mouth which devours the penis."

I deliberately pick these bizarre instances of this isolation of the mind and will because we have become so used to the greyer, more moderate forms that they pervade our thinking and are hard to notice. Of course the cult of the cerebral has milder, less dangerous aspects. Of course when it was (for perfectly sensible reasons) originally invented it did not require such aberrations. But it has begun to hypertrophy, and today it does require them. The individual will and intellect are exalted in a way which can make any interference with them—even that of other features of the organism to which they belong, still more that of other people—seem an outrage.

Moral solipsism is on offer. It is not just that rational choice is exalted high above the emotions. It has also been sharply separated from them, treated as the central, necessary part of personal identity, while the emotions are a chance, peripheral, extraneous matter. This analysis is not just inhumane, it is incoherent. Choice and thought cannot be separated from feeling; they are all aspects of a single process. Exalters of choice and of the intellect are not immune from feeling; they are following one set of feelings rather than another without noticing it.

The weaknesses of the intellectualist and voluntarist positions have been often pointed out, but it has proved surprisingly hard to shift them. What I want to say now is that this difficulty really does have something to do with the fact that nobody applied them to women. Both actual women and their symbolism were expected to remain outside the blaze of cerebral daylight. It was taken for granted that emotion would not actually lose its influence, because women would still supply it. Families would still be kept going. And the inconvenience caused by collisions between so many hard, resistant, autonomous individuals would be kept within bounds, because the customary cushions would still abound. *Hinc illae lacrimae.* Hence, that is, the alarm and horror which arose whenever it was suggested that women too might have an intellect and a will. For increasingly, as the cerebral view of personal identity developed, this meant that they would each simply *be* an intellect and a will. All the other aspects of human nature, which had been left by a tacit division of labour entirely in their keeping, would be lost for ever.

This belief was shown repeatedly and with extraordinary naivety about the suffrage. When British women finally did vote, their political effect was slight and if anything conservative—they may well have been responsible for throwing out the Liberal government which had enfranchised them. But in advance the change seemed to many people, including many women, monstrously destructive and unthinkable.

This surely was because the vote was itself a central symbol of rationality. In voting, a man was conceived to operate as an abstraction—a coldly calculating citizen, who on many theories might be expected to be purely self-interested; an economic man. Social-contract mythology presented him as originally a bargainer who was quite free not to make any particular bargain, a shopper who might well go elsewhere. He might, as Rousseau instructs Émile to do when his education is completed, travel all over Europe with a view to

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asking himself: "Which is my country?"

Rousseau completes this story by adding that one owes something to the land where one was born, and sending Émile home to his Sophie. But the social contract formula contains also another possibility—the germ of a development towards a total and inhuman detachment, an unmitigated solipsistic egoism. The way in which it has grown since Rousseau's day, especially in economic theory, has taken it steadily in this direction. The tacit refusal to extend it to women, a refusal which for some time concealed and partly mitigated its dangers and absurdities, can no longer be maintained, because feminists have rumbled it.

The choice now is between promoting everybody, equally, to the position of a Hobbesian or Sartrean solitary individual, or re-thinking the notion of individuality radically from scratch. It is cheering to see that feminists are at present proving extremely critical of the moves towards the first alternative, which were very common a decade back. They can now play an extremely important part in bringing about the second.

Selves & Sequences

New Poetry—By JOHN MOLE

SOMETIMES I can't help feeling that too many poets find the idea of writing a sequence irresistible, and for dubious reasons. Perhaps it's a bid by old-timers to stay in the ring after they've lost confidence in their footwork, a mid-career anxiety to increase the odds in the posterity stakes, or a beginner's urge to be a cuckoo among the fledglings. The nature of the market, such as it is, doesn't help. Faced with the prospect of a lifetime filling little spaces between book reviews, waiting to be "fitted in" by editors, ambition becomes impatient, and experience develops ploys for attention. Small, real talents begin dreaming of the full page. Their fragments are sent out all over the place, marked with the tell-tale signs of spurious intent: *from Notes of a One-Eyed Jack* or *Sonnet XII*. Here, they imply, is a serious poet with purpose, an incipient *book*. And when the book (if it does) appears, it's full of all those bits cobbled together, threaded with numbers, asterisks and sub-headings. The blurb writer heralds "a new sequence", the reviewer marks the occasion with a brief, tepid assessment, and at the bottom of his infrequent column a new contender—having waited for months to appear—is biding its time while further fragments pile up behind it. So much for poetry. And who pays for the damage?

Well, something like that. Of course there are some fine, inevitable sequences being written at the moment—such as Tony Harrison's *Continuous*—which create genuine excitement and anticipation, and whose source is, at the deepest poetic level, imaginative; but there are many others which could—and often do—just start and stop anywhere when the controlling, opportunist impulse reckons the time to be right. A few good poems, as good poems must, leap to attention from the rickety framework, but even then they can have a hard time of it and tend to look like accidents. Somehow one is grateful to them, as to smuggled contraband, simply for having got through. They are memorable, not least, for *being* memorable. Poet *X*, we say, is lucky at the customs. What a pity, though, that he needed to hide his gifts at the bottom of so many suitcases and beneath so much luggage.

Perhaps most alarming of all, though, is the book-length sequence of fearsome intellectual ingenuity by an established poet assured of his readership. *His* purpose can be in little doubt. He has set himself a task and slogged away at it, desk-bound—an exemplar of endeavour, deceiving no one but himself. "A darned clever bunch!" we exclaim, echoing Ezra Pound's pilgrim, to which he'll no doubt reply, "But I meant them for *poems*." This kind of poet, who is usually much honoured by universities, belongs in his own Creative Writing Class. He knows all the pegs and how to hang his lines on them. His book is exhaustive and in its way (which has little to do with poetry) admirable. It's an instruction manual, demonstrating how to do it and how to keep it going. *What* it is, and *where* it's going, and *why*, are questions raised and at the same time shamed by the earnest immensity of the effort.

John Hollander avoids falling into this last category by the skin of his poems, though the skeleton of his latest enterprise could fairly be said to rattle with remorseless ingenuity. *Powers of Thirteen*[1]—"this/mess of amazing amusements I've been working through" which also aspires to be a "grammar of storage"—is a sequence of 169 thirteen-liners, working out at 2,197 lines, each of thirteen syllables. A quick turn on the calculator comes up with the figure of 28,560 or, in the words of line 7 of poem 27 (ironically titled "At the End of the Line" since it's very far from being that), "twenty-eight thousand, five hundred sixty syllables." And just in case we haven't twigged, or would like it put yet another way, one of the notes at the back explains that $28,561 = 13^4$.

Once alerted to the rules of this power-game, one starts seeing the number everywhere. Often it announces itself

[1] *Powers of Thirteen*. By JOHN HOLLANDER. Secker & Warburg, £5.95.

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directly (in poem 21, for example, as the stars of the thirteen original colonies of the USA) or comes thinly disguised as in poem 83, each line of which begins with the letter M—obvious enough not to need a note. Poem 134 announces: "M's verses (wrote the boring lady bard now dead) smelled/Of the lamp", and continues with a meditation on lamps which, in turn, leads to the nostalgic recall of "the metallic smell of my small flashlight sweeping out/Pale demonstrations in the sky of the summer night/That awakened my wide, thirteen-year-old longing eye." A convenient age to have been at the time.

After a while, the hunt can become obsessive. Zechariah and Ezekiel are glossed in a note from which we learn that the Ezekiel reference is to 3:1. Since the Zechariah reference is to 5:1, I can only suppose either that Zechariah was disobliging or that Ezekiel was in on the game but had cross-vision. There is also a perfectly rhymed sonnet buried in poem 51, offering a do-it-yourself exercise in the placing of the caesura (14 into 13 *will* go!). But enough. I mustn't spoil all the fun, or give the impression that the game isn't worth *any* of the candle.

There is, in fact, some fine writing in *Powers of Thirteen*, and it is only fair, at this stage, to quote a poem in full:

> *The pine with but one thought regards the water against*
> *Which it rises, the wide bay with so much on its mind—*
> *Clumps of nearby island and smudges of distant rock,*
> *Other firs at the end of the long meadow which cut*
> *Into the water's extent of consciousness, and at*
> *The faraway edge of the day, an elaborate*
> *Serial narrative of sundown. Now a long yawl*
> *Crawls wearily into sight: the pine of one idea*
> *Points to it as if it should remind the water of*
> *Something; but the bay, as if in some old joke about*
> *Absorption, is reminded of the sky—everything*
> *Reminding water of the sky—despite its bazaar*
> *Of reflections. This puzzles the single-minded pine.*

The title "Opacities of the Pine" points up Hollander's debt to Wallace Stevens, as does the whole poem with its vivid metaphorical exploration of abstract thought—of idea in action—but it is more tribute than pastiche, and it *sounds* beautiful. The ghost of pale Ramon Fernandez must be nodding his assent in that world of supreme fiction to which, at his most inventive (as distinct from ingenious), Hollander also aspires. And there's Whitman, too: "Now I am at the work of confection even when/Loafing, not irrelevantly, near the oven door/Where what goes on is no longer in my hands."

In fact, a mixture of "confection" and "loafing" is what *Powers of Thirteen* really has to offer. Bauble and nourishment in just about equal measure, although the pun on "loafing" is typical and belongs neither to Stevens (who would have owned to the confection) nor to Whitman (despite the borrowed word), but to Hollander the possessed verbal trickster. When "what goes on is no longer in my hands", *Powers of Thirteen* relaxes into poetry, but for too much of the time Hollander gets his hands on everything, and whips it through the hoops of a brilliant, self-indulgent, performance. In the end, despite my admiration for such dazzling artistry and—yes—showmanship, I found the book tedious, and its length merely numerically necessary. A handful of excellent poems stand out from the various groupings on themes of love, identity, place, making, and the phenomena of recurrence and *déjà-vu*, but they are eventually swallowed up by the voracious context. I'm afraid that the lady bard might have passed the same judgment on H's project as she did on M's poems.

WHERE HOLLANDER gives the impression of being a poet who yokes his poems too systematically together with a loud, demonstrative cleverness, F. T. Prince displays a modest, unstrained gift for quiet and original arrangement. He has a musician's instinct for varying his themes into coherent movements, and for him a sequence is a complementary patterning of shapes and cadences. His verse is, in the very best sense, civilised. It's the exercise of a subtle poetic intelligence rather than of an intellect commandeering the resources of poetry. Each of the three long poems which make up his new collection, *Later On*,[2] seems written in one breath and with an intimate attention to measure, although each is very different from the others.

"The Yüan Chên Variations", based on Arthur Waley's translation of poems by the T'ang Dynasty poet Po Chü-i, groups a series of five-line stanzas into four sections. They celebrate Po Chü-i's friendship for Yüan Chên, and achieve a ghostly, impressionistic narrative of companionship, ageing, loss, and memory. The movement of the verse is limpid, a translucent wash inscribed with delicate observation which never blurs or sentimentalises. At the risk of confusing musical and visual analogies, I'd say that the experience of reading these variations is like looking at a series of Hokusai landscapes and imagining them as backgrounds to a conversation piece. Prince's careful syllabic count and scrupulous rhyming hold in focus sentiments which could so easily become mannered, and they keep the balance between the elderly poet-narrator's discreet frenzy—sharply conveyed—and a pervasive mood of literary contrivance. At times it is almost as if the later Yeats had taken to water-colours:

> *Yet sound above, beneath*
> *I have "green" old age:*
> *still have eyes and teeth—*
> *still strength and will to see,*
> *and play the sage*
> *through strange wild scenery...*
>
> *Waves glint and tap.*
> *Thinking "Here you*
> *could never have been".*
> *I pause: but have been seen*
> *by a dipper with blue*
> *wings, who gives us his nap.*

This is precise, elegant and accomplished.

So, too, are the rather more compacted, argumentative stanzas of "A Byron-Shelley Conversation" in which the two posthumous romantics relish the opportunity of exploring the differences between each other's life and work, and the ways in

[2] *Later On*. By F. T. PRINCE. Anvil Press Poetry, £3.95.

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which they have been appropriated or misunderstood: "Come, why should we repress/now, talking each to each/such things as we might stick/to say out once, as not/polite or politic?" No reason at all, though some might consider that neither of them stuck to say out much when alive. Good scholarly knock-about, drawing on several literary sources, and turning on fascinating issues of politics and the "sweet degradation" of love.

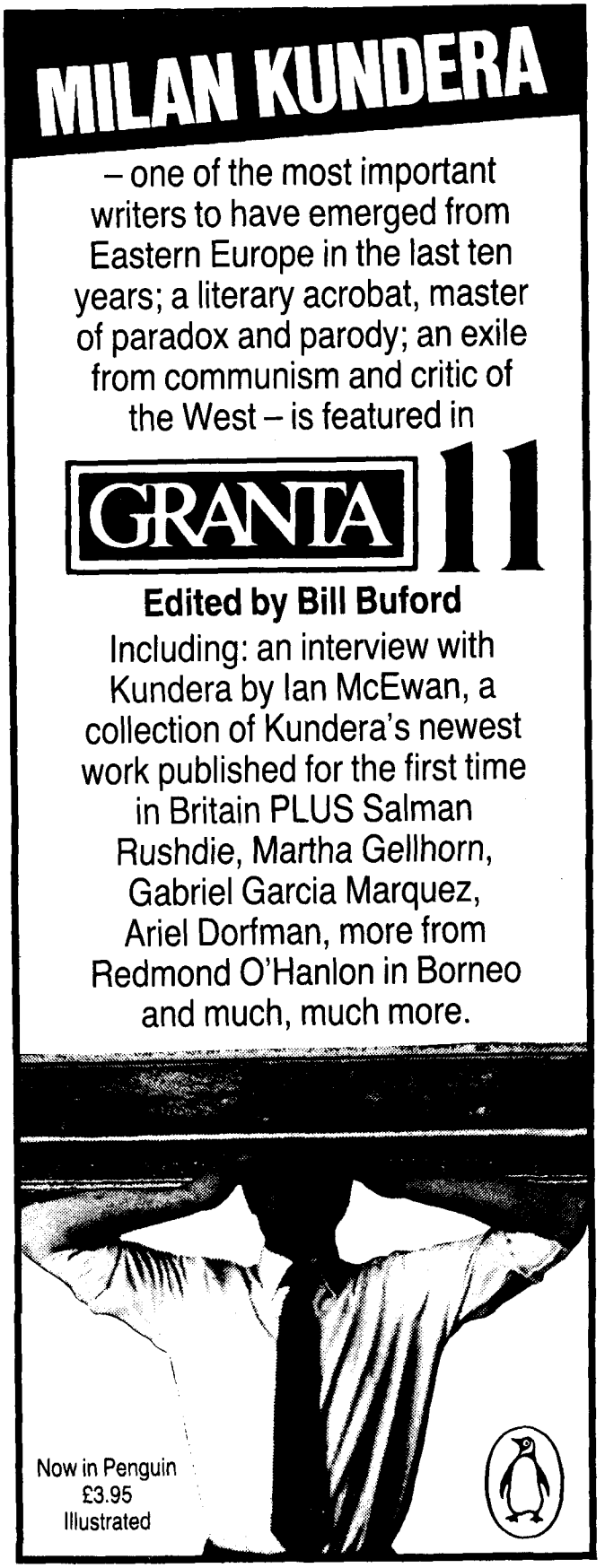
Most remarkable of the three poems, though, is "His Dog and Pilgrim", a canine autobiography in five sections. Its narrator is the companion of the legendary St Rock, and through his fragmentary observations—made with a kind of gnomic, subservient courtliness in which a doggy pidgin-English imitates His Master's Voice—the saint's story is obliquely told. This attendant hound seems almost, at times, The Dog, as he arranges crumbs of perception into cryptic offerings of wisdom. It's impossible to quote briefly from such an original oddity without making it sound like teasing nonsense. The poem's delight is in the sustained, solemn playfulness of its language, its quaintly lyrical jokiness on a serious theme—something of Joyce's "moo-cow" or of Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*, but much more of *itself*. Canis Ludens is no mere bow-wow, *Later On* is a hugely enjoyable book, and F. T. Prince—too often referred to as the quondam author of "Soldiers Bathing"—should be reckoned one of the best poets of his generation.

ONE OF THE POEMS IN George Szirtes' new collection, *Short Wave*,[3] is entitled "Against Dullness"—a stricture which seems blithely irrelevant to his concerns. He couldn't be dull if he tried, because if he did the clouds would come gift-wrapped. His imagination is edged, even at its darkest, with a silver lining, and colour is the very life of his designs. In "A Pheasant" he quotes Shakespeare's Feste: "He that is dead need fear no colours"—and in his own work, as if to insist on the vivid uncertainties of living, the animated play of tints and shades carry many of the poems' intimations. Their frequencies, given Szirtes' equal delight in formal verse patterns, are a kind of sound made visible, a kaleidoscope of resonant glimpses. He delights in precise ambiguities and the endless possibilities of variousness clearly defined, but his quick intelligence usually saves his most dandified performances if not from a certain mock-sententiousness then at least from becoming mere show. As he writes in "Redcurrants", it is "the fate of jewellery, to go/forth into the world as concentration/without a thing to wear except one colour." *One* is simply not enough. Its price would be fixed, and for Szirtes everything is always on offer.

His world, too, is one of objects, numinous *trouvailles*, the discovery of which—as his poetic horizons have broadened—has brought him into closer touch with his middle-European background:

> *My people, by whom I mean those curious sets*
> *Of non-relations in provincial towns,*

[3] *Short Wave*. By GEORGE SZIRTES. Secker & Warburg, £4.00.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Sit ripening brightly in the Weltanschauung
Of other poets. Here is one who follows
A second-hand pair of shoes into the Courts
Of Social History. Another ransacks
His late unlettered father's bedside drawer
And finds dead ukuleles littered there.
What heraldic yet surreal landscapes!
To lie in the bed of your ancestors
And feel the fit. . . .

That enticing, yet ominously haunted, link between a second-hand pair of shoes and the Courts of Social History indicates a direction Szirtes' recent work appears to have been taking. The light entering his studio, though no less brilliant, is becoming not so much refracted from a consortium of neatly-placed aesthetic items as absorbed by rather more weathered properties whose familiar shapes have been cut or woven by history. Whereas his earlier domestic interiors tended to suggest a poet getting used to each room and learning how to write in it, a poem like "Bedroom Verse 1" from his new collection reveals home to be the starting-point for more foreign concerns:

It's true we have our scandals—no one knows
what happened when the lights went out or didn't
or what was said at certain hours of night
beyond the passport office of our clothes,
the secret codeword to the waiting sentry,
the brief descriptions and the formal entry.

The entry is still formal, neo-Audenesque—if anything, more so than in the previous volumes—but "the passport office" admits Szirtes into more darkly populated areas of the imagination, despite the often debonair insouciance of his sunnyside manner:

You grab your coat and hat and go outside,
leave doorsteps filthy with anxieties
while treading a fine undulation, cracks
for hopscotch and the promised gold of trees
in autumn, the dull streets of human pride.

It will be interesting to see where he goes on to direct his feet.

GEORGE SZIRTES DOES NOT appear in Michael Schmidt's new anthology, *Some Contemporary Poets of Britain and Ireland*,[4] despite the editor's wish to encourage "an aptitude for discriminating and pleasurable reading" based on those aural skills that he finds "most wanting among younger readers." On the other hand, "the truncated stories and vignettes" of the youngest poet in the anthology—Michael Hofmann—are offered as part of that encouragement. Presumably Schmidt agrees with Hofmann's publishers that he has "a unique tone of voice", and I suppose in his flat rainy-pavement sort of way he has.

In the words of a poem published since *Nights in the Iron Hotel*,[5] there's a "chemical sadness" about Hofmann's bitter-sweet contemporary scenarios, an acetate gloom. If George Szirtes is a studio painter, Hofmann is a cinéaste. He *runs* his poems, rather than utters them, and his voice—such as it is—seems as non-committal as the mechanism of a projection booth. This has the effect of concentrating attention, as it were, on the screen where his images flicker. They are certainly minutely observant, full of the play of a hyper-tense, X-ray irony, but it's all chillingly impersonal, and even love is watched coldly from a distance:

Our feelings are shorter and faster now.
You confess a new infidelity. This time,
a trombone player. His tender mercies. . . .

All night, we talk about separating.
The radio wakes us with its musak.
In a sinister way, you call it lulling.

We are fascinated by our own anaesthesia,
our inability to function. Sex is a luxury,
an export of healthy physical economies.

This is confident, skilful writing of its kind, but the first sentence of that last stanza could all too easily be Hofmann's poems defining themselves.

A GLANCE AT ANY SECTION of the contents page in Elizabeth Bartlett's *Strange Territory* [6] gives ready warning of what one is in for. "Opting Out", "Senile Dementia", "Psycho-Geriatric", "Rain", "999 Call", "Night Duty", "The Intruder" (a limited number of guesses as to what *that* is!). For the last thirteen years, Elizabeth Bartlett has worked as a secretary and receptionist for a GP and the Home Care Service, and her poetry is witness to the suffering in which she has been implicated. Vulnerably human, there is no distinction between the professional and the personal where her response to others' pain is concerned, although she is often all too helplessly aware of being the enemy:

. . . he was an arrogant man the neighbours said,
who once sent hats to Buck House and Ascot, in his time,
(those festive hats, those aristocratic faces).
I felt I'd done him dirt, poor chap, and look up
at his louvred windows late at night hoping to see a banner

ELIZABETH, I FORGIVE YOU. NOT YOUR FAULT.

I look, but it is never there.

This is the work of a remorseless truth-teller, and *Strange Territory* is a collection of desperate situations survived, it would seem, through an equal measure of hurt love for the individual and driving anger against inadequate systems. Poem after poem promises to be numbingly depressing—after those titles, just look at some of the first lines—but Elizabeth Bartlett's courage is, in the end, triumphant. Hers is the day-book of a night-nurse of the soul: forceful, pessimistic, it deals

[4] *Some Contemporary Poets of Britain and Ireland*. Edited by MICHAEL SCHMIDT. Carcanet, £9.95.

[5] *Nights in the Iron Hotel*. By MICHAEL HOFMANN. Faber, £4.00.

[6] *Strange Territory*. By ELIZABETH BARTLETT. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets, £3.00.

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in the kind of reality far too easily categorised as "documentary reportage." There's very little to *enjoy*, and some readers may certainly feel like edging away from such a grim presence, but, make no mistake, these are poems.

COMPARED WITH SUCH UNCOMFORTABLE, authentic work as Elizabeth Bartlett's, George MacBeth's celebration of last and first things in *The Long Darkness* [7] seems, for all its eloquent sonority, a disconcertingly easy read. These new poems, many of them occasioned by the death of his wife's mother and the expectation of a new child, are at the same time a guided tour of his Norfolk demesne—or a proprietorial survey of it from his study window—and a sustained exercise in neo-Victorian pastiche. The Tennyson of "In Memoriam" is everywhere in MacBeth's autumnal vistas and night thoughts, and domestic occasions are all the time lifting off into lofty utterance through "the heart's high door."

Paralleling his meditations on human mortality, the death of small creatures is recorded in elegant, mournful stanzas, and the "claw-strike" of his ubiquitous cat is knowingly Darwinian. The recurrence of such emotive captions as "the marauding claws", "the inevitable mouths", "the crumbling dark", "the last red admirals" all too soon becomes predictable; and although the book's more playful pieces insist that "what's begun/In quirky humour, ends as reverence" the humour invariably seems strained—as if it just can't wait to become reverence. And *when* the reverence comes the trouble begins.

Despite the intimate, personal concerns of *The Long Darkness* its over-riding tone is one of self-conscious debt to the 19th century, and although throughout MacBeth reminds us of his own presence ("Now that I think of it . . .", "Yes, I know/How many of us feel . . .", "Nobody, though—be honest—really feels . . .", etc.), he is far too readily overwhelmed by his tutelary ghosts. The echoes are distracting: "the tormented, buzzing fly/Glazed by the weeping windowpane", coming at the climax of an otherwise powerfully independent poem would claim, I suspect, to be itself but is, in fact, more than an *allusion* to Tennyson's famous blue fly line from "Mariana." Or, again, the redwings in "Feeding the Birds" which "gather twittering" belong so exclusively to another poet's autumn where they appeared as swallows that they really have no business here.

MacBeth has a reputation as a games-player who can get away with anything, but as yet his new-found elegiac cloak, spangled with a benign, whimsically paternal glitter, seems an uncomfortable fit. *The Long Darkness* is the work of a prodigiously accomplished poet in transition. Interesting things are happening all right. It's just that as he moves around his emblematic estate he still appears too much like a gifted actor strutting his hour upon the stage.

LAURENCE LERNER'S ACT is a versatile one, and often very entertaining. His *Selected Poems*[8] is a thought-provoking

[7] *The Long Darkness*. By GEORGE MACBETH. Secker & Warburg, £5.95.

[8] *Selected Poems*. By LAURENCE LERNER. Secker & Warburg, £7.95.

The Lyttelton Hart-Davis Letters
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JOHN MURRAY

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volume full of well-designed poems which make points and offer themselves for discussion. Lerner is a natural for school anthologies—and I don't mean that disparagingly. He favours the small-scale dramatic monologue, and although his different voices have a tendency to sound the same, that sameness is always approachable and attractive—a clever, decent levelness of heart and head with a sardonic edge which adds a certain bite.

Even his popular computer couple A.R.T.H.U.R. and M.A.R.T.H.A. are a curiously sensible pair, and their supposedly innocent and accidental witticisms are nicely controlled by what I suspect to be Lerner's discreet moral censor. Their random self-analysis becomes the reader's illumination, as does their baffled attempt to size up human behaviour—on which, of course, they always have insufficient data. In fact, human behaviour looked at from the standpoint of speakers with insufficient data is a recurrent theme in Lerner's work. In "The Merman", for example:

> *When humans talk they split their say in bits*
> *And bit by bit they step on what they feel.*
> *They talk in bits, they never talk in all.*
> *So live in wetness swimming they call "sea";*
> *And stand on dry and watch the wet waves call*
> *They still call "sea".*
> *Only their waves don't call.*

Lerner's best poems, though, are those in which he dispenses with contrived perspectives and writes with a memorable directness. Nearly all of them come from his 1980 volume *The Man I Killed* and are included here. The finest of all is "Raspberries", a meditation on love and death which, for me, leaves George MacBeth standing.

There are a few good poems, too, in Lerner's new collection, *Bible Poems*[9]—a reworking of biblical narratives, mainly from the Old Testament—but rather more merely clever ones. For much of the time I find myself too close to A.R.T.H.U.R. and M.A.R.T.H.A. territory for comfort. "I shall decide the moment", says a remotely smiling God, "for I control the game." So does Lerner. There's a lot of modish, in-jokey academic reference on the one hand—"If you deconstruct Job's discourse . . .", "Joseph chose the future/And set to work, decoding their deep structure"—and glib demythologising on the other. The poems are embarrassingly full of nudges—"We all know the story . . ."—and those laughter-seeking parentheses for which "plain speakers" always have a weakness: "He had a lot of children/(As Kings of Israel do)", " 'The Philistines will triumph. Blood will flow./Your sons and you will be with me tomorrow'—The usual stuff." *Bible Poems* contains too much of that "usual stuff" we tend to get when witty poets go to work on familiar stories. At times, Lerner seems to promise more, as in the excellent "Wrestling with the Angel" and "The Three", but only fitfully.

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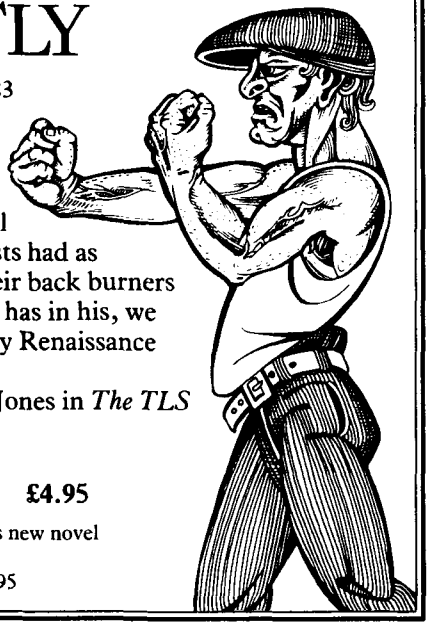

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For John Cotton it has always been "a function of art to snatch order/From life's disorderly house", and coming up with such confident nuggets of definition which just avoid the platitudinous has remained a characteristic of his attractively dogged poetry. *The Storyville Portraits*[10] is of a piece with his earlier collections in that it celebrates the uniqueness of small, humdrum occasions and modest histories.

When these histories are personal—notably in "Somme Man: July 1916", an elegiac tribute to his father—Cotton's recording of them is immediate in its impact, and deeply affecting. He is the self-deprecating laureate of life's understudies, attracted to those often anonymous figures who have accidentally found themselves on the fringe of significant events. Much of his work is a sort of wistful rescue operation, a naming of the bit-parts, "a fine feeling for the ephemeral." He is particularly attentive to old photographs:

> *And Adele,*
> *Which one was Adele? . . .*
> *Was it you pinned by the camera to the door,*
> *In your best street clothes,*
> *While your companion sleeps in the crib?*
> *You look vulnerable enough.*
> *The weak need the weak,*
> *Only the strong should risk consolation.*

Despite occasional bursts of lyricism, Cotton is a prosaic poet; nevertheless, although he seldom lets a flutter of metaphor go unchecked by some sensible, rhythmically inert comment, this very awkwardness is in the end so consistent as to become the

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[9] *Bible Poems*. By Laurence Lerner. Secker & Warburg, £5.95.

[10] *The Storyville Portraits*. By John Cotton. Headland Publications (38 York Avenue, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside L48 3JF), £2.25.

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poems' guarantee. If he keeps putting his foot in them it is because *both* feet are already so firmly on the ground that neither of them can miss. He is unpretentious and undeceived, and one can only hope it is with affection that the Delphic Oracle parodies the rather bluff and breezy manner which sometimes threatens to reduce his serious themes to banality:

"Push-off Cotton" it said,
"You've had your future."

I'm sure it knows his first name, really, and is expecting him back.

How To Mislead a People & Ruin a Cause

The Rise & Fall of the PLO—By DAVID PRYCE-JONES

THE SIX DAY WAR of 1967 startlingly reversed the ways in which Israel and the Arabs were perceived by some influential sections of public opinion. Within weeks, Israelis found themselves projected as conquerors, rather than people obliged to fight for their lives. Arabs, hitherto judged to have been unattractively out for blood, were now thought to be defending themselves reasonably and even admirably. In particular, a new mass-movement, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, was deemed to have arisen to lead another Third-World popular uprising against a neo-colonialist and imperialist monstrosity, "the Zionist entity" (which was still Israel in the real world).

Soviet-Russian policy played its part in the manipulation of opinion. Miscalculations by President Nasser of Egypt, and by the Syrian government, had brought about the War. Both countries were then courting the Soviet Union, and much had been expected from them by the Kremlin. In the ensuing disappointment, President Kosygin made (as early as 13 June 1967, to the General Assembly of the United Nations) a comparison between Israel and Hitler's Germany. By 17 June, *Pravda*'s correspondent in Rome was publishing the first long-distance tales of Israeli atrocities against Arabs. From these *agit-prop* beginnings, the Communist press in most countries of the world (not least, or least tragically, Israel's Communist papers such as *Al-Ittihad*) has ever since, and unremittingly, applied the wildest "Hitlerite" images and analogies to blacken Israel.

Political purposes, rather than racism, originally motivated this campaign. The distinction was soon blurred. In the Soviet Union, it is today commonplace for prominent writers like Lev Korneyev to describe Jews everywhere as traitors and Nazis by definition. In London. *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* are among publications which on several occasions since 1967 have charged Israel with premeditated atrocities against Palestinians. The American press has carried similar accusations, rising to a crescendo in 1982, when columnists and cartoonists especially delighted in comparing the Israelis in Lebanon to Hitler's genocidists.

Accordingly, plenty of *bien pensants* have believed what they were hearing. Without necessarily intending to do so, such people have fallen in behind the new Party line, participating with the Marxist and fellow-travelling Left in a pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli swing. To the Palestinians, it may have been a source of some anxiety to be adopted by the Soviet Union: but it was surely an absolute amazement to become the mascot of assorted Western progressives as well. This might not have mattered—it might even have helped them to obtain the justice they undoubtedly need and deserve—except that Palestinians had been considered synonymous with the PLO. This misrepresentation was highly damaging, for the front-line victims of the PLO have not been the Israelis, but the Palestinians themselves. In the gulf between ordinary Palestinians and the PLO an entire nation has been lost.

"The history of the PLO", writes Jillian Becker in *The PLO*,[1] "is a chronicle of wrong judgements, of repeated mistakes, of lessons never learnt, of faith in wishes. . . ." Stating the obvious in this stark manner, her account helps to redress current false Israeli-Palestinian projections, and to explain as well the real nature of the calamity that has befallen the Palestinians.

On the ground, less had been changed than was at first supposed by the Six Day War of June 1967. Miscalculating in his turn, King Hussein of Jordan had aligned himself with Nasser. In the fighting, therefore, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—parts of historic Palestine—had been captured by Israel from Jordan and Egypt respectively. What would be the response of the million or so Palestinians now under occupation? Where did the future of these people and their territories lie? Once the drama of the War had subsided, these were the only new considerations.

TWO STRUCTURES WERE then available through which to express Palestinian nationalism, and either might have built a popular national movement. The PLO had been founded by Nasser a short while previously, in 1964, as an instrument for pursuing

[1] *The PLO: The Rise and Fall of the Palestine Liberation Organization.* By JILLIAN BECKER. Weidenfeld, £12.50.

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Egyptian foreign policy by means of the Palestine issue. Ahmed Shuqairy, selected by Nasser to activate the PLO, was a Palestinian *effendi* who had made himself useful to several Arab régimes. In the aftermath of the 1967 War, Shuqairy was out-manoeuvred by Yasser Arafat, another Palestinian of the same class and type, leader of *El Fatah*, the alternative and more conspiratorial Palestinian group, a few score strong at the time. In rivalry to the PLO, *Fatah* had been founded by Syria, to be an instrument for pursuing Syrian foreign policy by means of the Palestine issue.

Heedlessly renouncing diplomatic options, *Fatah* immediately started hit-and-run operations on the newly-occupied West Bank. The scale of operations was insignificant. The Israelis, however, hitherto "waiting for a telephone call" (in the words of Moshe Dayan), were enabled to apply security arguments to justify their consolidation in these territories. Guerrilla tactics had already proved suicidal by the end of 1967, when at Syrian prompting Arafat set about ousting Shuqairy altogether, to merge *Fatah* and the PLO under his leadership.

Opponents as they had been, Arafat and Shuqairy had important features in common. Both had willingly subjected the Palestine issue to the sponsorship and arbitration of Arab governments, so precluding the formation of a genuine national movement. Both had promoted attacks on Israel without reference to the willingness or suitability of Palestinians for the military option. Comparisons cannot be taken further, for the bombastic Shuqairy lacked personal appeal while Arafat was distinguished by a flair, amounting almost to genius, for public relations. At press conferences in those early days, he would arrive punctually a couple of hours late, in a theatrical atmosphere, to pronounce heavy threats with the widest of smiles. In Amman, he attracted one foreign correspondent to perhaps every hundred PLO volunteers. Summer nights echoed with gunfire. The scene was picturesque. News was manufactured and opinion was manipulated in a virtuoso performance.

Western readiness to take Arafat and his threats at face value was always hard to fathom. The logical end of his policy was the extermination of the Israelis; but neither the foreign correspondents nor their readers wanted that, and very few believed that it would happen. And perhaps Arafat himself did not believe what he was saying about liberation, for he very well knew that almost the entire population under Israeli control was accommodating to circumstances, frustrating as these might be. It was not dead Israelis they wanted, but peace. Slogans about imperialism were not automatically self-fulfilled formulas for mass-movements, whatever PLO members might learn from their handbooks.

By 1968 the PLO had become the contemporary arena in which its Arab sponsors set out and advanced their competing ideologies and ambitions. Rather than coalescing, the PLO consisted of mutually incompatible splinter groups, each of whose nominal allegiance to the Palestine cause was subordinated to the interests of the diverse Arab paymasters. Estimates of actual Palestinians in the PLO in the years from 1967 to the present range from 10,000 to 30,000. Perhaps as many again were paid mercenaries from Arab or Moslem countries, with a sprinkling of Europeans. Observing this, Palestinians everywhere prudently did their best to keep such liberation at arm's length. A few dared to challenge the men who claimed to be representing them; but they were murdered or otherwise silenced.

If the PLO men presented little or no trouble to Israel across the border, they were difficult and lawless guests in Arab host countries. King Hussein in 1970 was the first to order his army to move against the PLO. Palestinians in Jordan, more than a million in number, remained passive before this assertion of central authority, even when refugee camps were shelled. A single Palestinian unit defected from the King's army; but otherwise the repudiation of the PLO by its potential supporters was almost complete. Shattered, the PLO regrouped in Lebanon. Central authority there was too weak to deal with this new militia disturbing constitutional arrangements which were fragile already. Since then, civil fighting in Lebanon has been more or less continuous.

Once again, ordinary Palestinians refrained from mobilising. They fully recognised the terrorist process which would leave them the victims of their own kind, intimidated by the PLO to attack opponents whom the PLO itself had provoked. The disgust and fear which the PLO and its brutalities aroused in Lebanese (whether Christian, Sunni, Shia or Druze) were indeed taken out or avenged on defenceless Palestinians. The slaughter at Tel el-Zaatar and the Sabra and Chatila massacres were only the most notorious episodes in the bloodshed inflicted on these people on the pretext that the PLO is waging their "war of liberation." When the Israelis finally expelled most of the PLO from southern Lebanon, and the Syrians completed the symmetry by expelling the remainder from the north, the Palestinians in the country were as relieved as everyone else.

Responsibility also falls on the Arab régimes which over the years endorsed PLO claims. Notably at the 1974 Rabat Conference, but on other well-publicised occasions too, the Arab régimes have declared that the PLO is the "sole legitimate representative" of Palestinians. Meanwhile these same governments have alternated fine words with arrests and expulsion and killing, expediently promoting or cracking down on the PLO, to leave what must be at least a hundred thousand Palestinians dead, the armed and the unarmed at last undifferentiated in this ghastly outcome.

No national liberation movement is justification for corpse-making, but perhaps nobody so far has displayed with the force and clarity of Jillian Becker how the PLO was no new popular departure in 1967, but a continuation of a history which has been cruelly consistent. The PLO was merely the latest handful of Palestinians to have forced the majority to reject any kind of compromise which might salvage their national future.

Quite what response was appropriate to Zionism, with its moral and political complexities, has been perplexing Palestinians for over a century. A conservative and traditionalist people, they preferred to be left alone, naturally enough,

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but none the less understood the motives driving Jews to seek refuge among them. The Palestinian misfortune was never to have a leader to articulate and legitimise their desire for political accommodation. On the contrary, no sooner was the British Mandate in Palestine declared after the First World War than Haj Amin el-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem and *faute de mieux* national spokesman, built his position and his career on doing violence to the Jews. His lack of success in persuading Palestinians to follow him was astonishing. Between 1921 and 1936, however, he blocked single-handedly any solution which the Mandate authorities might have imposed to correspond to the actual day-to-day collaboration between the two communities. Opportunity for compromise was lost once Hitler's intentions to wage war in Europe were evident. The Arab revolt of 1936–39 was instigated by Haj Amin on the assumption that the turn of events in Europe allowed a strike against the British, in order afterwards to do away with the Jews. No more than 15,000 Palestinians took up arms. Crushed, Haj Amin fled to Germany and embraced Nazism. Hitler, he declared, was "the great leader and teacher."

Palestinian leadership was still more seriously put to the test in 1947 and 1948. Jewish survivors from Europe were at their most desperate. Partition had been agreed at the United Nations. The exodus of Palestinians from their land was inspired by fear of Jewish intentions in the event of war, no doubt; but it was also a vote-of-no-confidence in their own leadership. Even at that point, Palestinians chose not to mobilise.

Against all expectation, yet another chance for compromise emerged when the whole of Palestine fell under Israeli rule in 1967. Had the PLO or *Fatah* chosen the political option and offered to negotiate unconditionally with Israel, a genuine national movement might very well have rallied and an independent Palestinian state become an unstoppable reality. Arafat was not the man for it. Like Haj Amin before him, he built his position and his career on the military option exclusively. And like Haj Amin he tied himself up in the knots of inter-Arab feuding.

On the international plane, however, the world had evolved. Where Haj Amin had put his trust in Adolf Hitler, Arafat turned to the heirs of Stalin. The Soviet Union had voted in 1948 for the foundation of Israel, but afterwards calculated that a strike against Jews might attract Arab allies in the Middle East and be advantageous in the confrontation with Western capitalism. In these perspectives, the Soviet Union was the successor power to Nazi Germany. After 1967, the Soviet Union financed and armed the PLO at an increasing pace, recognising it in 1974 as "the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people", and inciting it to attack Israel. *PLO in Lebanon: Selected Documents* [2] reveals from archives captured by the Israeli army in Lebanon the extent to which PLO members have been trained in the Soviet Union, and allowed themselves to be exploited for Soviet purposes. Scepticism about Arafat's effectiveness has alone prevented the Soviet Union from utilising the PLO as a complete surrogate. That is the measure of the betrayal of the Palestinians and their hopes for national independence.

[2] *PLO in Lebanon: Selected Documents*. Edited by RAPHAEL ISRAELI. Weidenfeld, £10.00.

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THE MILITARY OPTION is no longer available. The PLO is in a hiatus. A majority of its men, subdued by *force majeure*, takes orders only from Syria. A minority remains loyal to an Arafat who can do little except travel in search of sites for more of those famous press conferences. The end of the PLO, Jillian Becker concludes, is the beginning of hope for the Palestinians. It may be so, for the Israeli-Palestinian encounter is still characterised by resignation and regret, rather than hatred. But no Palestinian of standing has appeared to oppose the Haj Amin-Arafat line and to legitimise the concept of a shared peace.

Meanwhile public opinion is fed shoals of books like Helena Cobban's *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*,[3] which rehearse the rhetoric of a hundred congresses and a thousand resolutions to the effect that the PLO must be a popular liberation movement because it says it is, and its friends say it is; and words must come true if they are said to be Marxist. David Hirst, in his re-issued and revised *The Gun and the Olive Branch*,[4] can hardly control the hysteria with which, as usual, he blames the Jews for the plight of the Arabs. Psychiatrists alone can determine what guilts and excesses Western opinion-managers of this variety are suffering from, in so deforming reality. Why have such people been so anxious since 1967 to drive Palestinians into killing-grounds? Is not the present Palestinian ruin enough for them? Have they not had their fill of holocaust? If Jillian Becker's book is right, some ugly lies will be scotched, some myths will die. If Helena Cobban's book is right, more people will die, and they will be real people, in large numbers.

[3] *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*. By HELENA COBBAN. Cambridge University Press, £22.50, paper £6.95.

[4] *The Gun and the Olive Branch*. By DAVID HIRST. Faber, £12.50.

Benevolent Foreigner

On Prince Albert—By JOHN GRIGG

THE FIGURE OF the male consort has become very familiar in Britain, both in our royal palaces and now in 10 Downing Street. No doubt it will become much more familiar in all hereditary situations as time goes on, because it is hard to see how the prior successional rights of males can be justified in the age of sexual equality. Indeed, it is remarkable that the male bias in primogeniture has lasted as long as it has. But until recently it was, of course, accepted as part of the natural order, and one inevitable result has been that most of our sovereigns have been kings.

England had no queen regnant until Mary I ("Bloody Mary"), and the first male consort in our monarchical history was, therefore, her husband, Philip of Spain. The precedent could hardly have been less auspicious. English sentiment was dead against the marriage and Philip's status had to be very strictly circumscribed. He had the title of king, because although he was not yet King of Spain his father, Charles V, made him King of Naples and King of Jerusalem. In the marriage treaty it was arranged that he and Mary should share their respective titular dignities, but it was firmly established that he was to have no power in England and even Mary's attempt to have him crowned with the English consort's diadem had to be abandoned.

The Mary in the William-and-Mary combination was queen regnant as Mary II, sharing sovereignty with her husband, to whose dynastic claim hers was superior. As the elder daughter of the ousted James II, she had a better right to the throne than William, who was only a grandson of Charles I. But of course the power was his and he had to be king as well. After her death he continued to rule on his own.

In the reign of Anne (Mary's younger sister), the queen's husband, Prince George of Denmark, was no more than a prince consort, and a fairly dim one at that. She would have liked him to be joint-sovereign with herself, on the analogy of William and Mary, but the idea seemed absurd. Plainly the two cases were not analogous; Prince George was in no sense the equivalent of William. He had to be content with sitting in the House of Lords as Duke of Cumberland, and with being well provided for financially.

The next prince consort was the man who gave the title its unique historic resonance: Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, husband of Queen Victoria. There seems, in retrospect, to have been a strange determinism about the conjunction of an English reigning queen and a Coburg prince in the mid-19th century. At first there was every reason to expect that the couple in question would be the Prince Regent's daughter Charlotte and Albert's uncle Leopold (later first King of the Belgians). But Charlotte died before her father came to the throne, and two years later his brother Edward, Duke of Kent, decided it was his duty to marry. He then begat Victoria, who in due course became queen and married Albert. So the pattern was re-established.

There was, however, nothing inevitable about it. Despite Leopold's early conviction that Albert would be the right husband for Victoria—whose uncle he also was, since the Duchess of Kent was his sister—there were many who thought

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otherwise; and Victoria herself was by no means swept off her feet by Albert at their first meeting. He was not invited to her coronation, and the following year she wrote to Leopold: "I may not have the *feeling* for him which is requisite to ensure happiness. I *may* like him as a friend, and as a cousin, and as a brother, but not more." Albert's attitude to her at this stage is harder to divine. He seems to have admired her and to have had no romantic leanings towards anyone else. But he naturally found his position embarrassing, and by the autumn of 1839 was ready to withdraw if she did not make up her mind in his favour.

Fortunately for her and for England, she did. When she came to Windsor in October of that year she felt that he had changed for the better, and his "beauty" entranced her. On the 15th she proposed to him and he accepted. On 23 November she informed the Privy Council of her decision, and on 10 February 1840 they were married in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace. So England acquired the services of one of the most intelligent, conscientious and thoughtful young men of the age—who indeed, so far as his adopted country was concerned, did as much as anyone to express and define the age's character.

In most ways he was far more "Victorian" than Victoria; and to the extent that she became "Victorian" it was under his influence and, later, out of devotion to his memory. Wellington—always shrewd about people—commented that "it was the Prince who insisted on spotless character, the Queen not caring a straw about it." By nature she was pleasure-loving and irresponsible, whereas he was serious and high-minded. It was almost as if, in the plot of *Mansfield Park*, Edmund Bertram had married Mary Crawford rather than Fanny Price. (No novel, surely, conveys more powerfully the change in sensibility and moral tone from the 18th century to what was to become the Victorian age.) Yet from her engagement onwards Victoria was so much in love with Albert that she made strenuous efforts to conform to his view of life, though without ever quite managing to suppress her own rebellious impulses. Despite the undoubted warmth and mutuality of their affection their marriage was, therefore, one of frequent storm and stress, which may well have contributed to his premature death at the age of forty-two.

TWO NEW BOOKS ABOUT HIM have recently appeared, by Hermione Hobhouse[1] and Robert Rhodes James.[2] Both are of outstanding interest, and both deserve to be read for the light that they throw on rather different aspects of the Prince, reflecting the different qualifications of the two authors—Mr Rhodes James a politician, Miss Hobhouse an architectural writer. But neither can be said to supersede the delightful study of Albert by Roger Fulford, first published by Macmillan in 1949 and now, alas, out of print. All three books complement each other and should be read together. (Miss

[1] *Prince Albert: His Life and Work.* By HERMIONE HOBHOUSE. Hamish Hamilton, in conjunction with *The Observer,* Midland Bank Group, and Royal College of Art, £10.95.

[2] *Albert, Prince Consort.* By ROBERT RHODES JAMES. Hamish Hamilton, £15.00.

SURVEY

Spring 1984

Volume 28 no 1 (120)

Andropov and Chernenko Whither Big Brother?

Chernenko, in his role as ideological controller, has been promoting "socialist realism" in the Soviet arts and literature; it would seem that it is "socialist funerealism" that prevails in Soviet life.

However "interim" a leader Chernenko may turn out to be, neither the problems of the "real" succession nor the problems of the Soviet economy can be swept under the carpet.

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Hobhouse's was specially written for the Prince Albert exhibition mounted last year at the Royal College of Art, and is magnificently illustrated.)

Robert Rhodes James is at his best, naturally enough, on the political side of Albert's career. He shows how the Prince came to England determined that the Monarchy should be above party, but lost his first battle (over the composition of his personal staff) when the Queen backed her friend and mentor, the Whig Prime Minister, Melbourne, in insisting that he should have around him only people Melbourne approved of, and no Tories. At first she "had never thought of him becoming involved in her official political duties, which she continued to conduct in long conversations with Melbourne, Prince Albert not being invited." But gradually he asserted his right to be her principal adviser on politics as on everything else. Before long he was reading all the State documents that were sent to her—which in fact interested him far more than they interested her—and drafting her replies. By the end of his life he was a major political influence, and his last act was to moderate the wording of an official dispatch to Washington on the *Trent* affair, which was probably decisive in averting war between Britain and the United States.

He was able to act as her private secretary because there was then no royal secretariat such as there is today. It would be virtually impossible now for the Queen's husband to acquire a political role comparable with Albert's, since he would have to contend not only with Ministers but with her own large and entrenched corps of official advisers. (Is this why Prince Philip so often denounces bureaucracy?) Albert "devoured work", Mr Rhodes James tells us:

> "In one year he read, annotated, and advised upon several thousand documents from the Foreign Office alone. He personally designed and developed a highly efficient filing system, with swift cross-references. All his correspondence of any importance was in his own hand, and he wrote copies of any of his own letters he regarded as significant."

On the whole his political opinions were generous and enlightened. He was alive to the ghastly social problems of industrial England, gave full support to Shaftesbury's philanthropic efforts, and in May 1848 addressed, as its president, the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, "in total defiance of the advice and wishes of the Queen's Ministers." By the time he did this his favourite politician, Sir Robert Peel, had fallen from power after splitting his party on the issue of Corn Law Repeal. Albert and Peel were kindred spirits—both politically in the centre, both intellectuals and aesthetes, both earnest reformers, and both ill at ease with members of the traditional English governing class. When Peel introduced his measure for abolishing the Corn Laws, Albert chose the occasion for his first appearance in the gallery of the House of Commons. For this deliberate gesture of solidarity with his friend he was attacked by opponents of Repeal—but it was, surely, a less serious constitutional lapse than the appearance of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on the balcony of Buckingham Palace with Neville Chamberlain at the time of Munich, for which they have, rather miraculously, escaped censure. (It was, incidentally, Albert's idea that the Palace should have a balcony for such appearances.)

Victoria had hated Peel, along with all other Tories, at the beginning of her reign, but because of his friendship with Albert she gradually came round to him. Yet he was not really her sort of person, and there is a wry symbolism in the fact that during her widowhood the politician she most disliked was the leading heir of Peel—Gladstone—whereas her favourite, Disraeli, was the man whose brilliant opportunism had destroyed Peel.

THE PRINCE WAS A RELENTLESS do-gooder, and the range of his activities was astonishing. Perhaps his most valuable contribution of all was in the encouragement that he gave to the arts and sciences, and the apogee of his career was the Great Exhibition of 1851. Though many helped to make this the resounding success it was, it is fair to say that without his leadership it would probably never have happened. Robert Rhodes James claims that the idea of making it an *international* exhibition was his, but Hermione Hobhouse—who has also written a life of Thomas Cubitt, the creator of Belgravia—suggests that he got it from Cubitt, who in turn got it from somebody else. In any case Albert deserves the credit for taking the idea up, and for making the Exhibition more than just a display of British ingenuity. But there was no danger, at that time, that Britain would be eclipsed by any amount of foreign competition, and of nearly 14,000 exhibitors only about 6,500 were foreign; the rest were from the British Isles and

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Empire. As well as attracting over six million visitors the Exhibition made a profit of £186,000, which was later used for the development of "Albertopolis" in South Kensington.

How discerning and original was Albert as a patron of the arts? He was an excellent musician (piano and organ), a scholar of music, and a more than tolerable composer. In Roger Fulford's view he "played an important part" in the enrichment of musical taste in Britain which occurred in the middle years of the century. He had much to do with the choice of music to be performed under the auspices of the Philharmonic Society and the Antient Concerts (the two principal British concert-promoting bodies at the time), and his choice often broke new ground. For instance, he arranged for Wagner to conduct the overture to *Tannhäuser* at a Philharmonic Society concert in 1855. He also contributed to the rehabilitation of J. S. Bach, whose music had incomprehensibly gone out of fashion. On his initiative the Queen's private band became a proper orchestra, which gave the first performance in England of Schubert's C-major symphony; and it was at Windsor Castle that *Lohengrin* received its English première. Sterndale Bennett regarded Albert as "the ideal amateur of music."

In the visual arts he was more conventional, though ahead of his time in his appreciation of early Renaissance painting. Among works that he collected are a Duccio *Crucifixion*, Fra Angelico's *St Peter Martyr* and Cranach's *Apollo and Diana*. But Miss Hobhouse describes most of his purchases of contemporary works as "very orthodox", citing as examples *L'Amante* by Augustus Egg and *Disturbing the Congregation* by George Cruikshank. Frith discussed his *Derby Day* with him, and afterwards acted on a number of suggestions that the Prince made for improving the picture. Probably the best artist to whom Albert and Victoria gave their very active patronage was Landseer, but they entirely ignored the greatest of all English painters, who happened to be living at the time. Even though Turner travelled to Coburg in 1840 and did some paintings there—including one of Albert's childhood home, the Rosenau—none of his work was acquired by the royal couple.

Albert enjoyed dabbling in architecture, and had much to do with the designs for Osborne and Balmoral. At Osborne he worked with Cubitt, at Balmoral with a local architect, William Smith. For the additions to Buckingham Palace he collaborated with Edward Blore, and devoted himself particularly to the decoration of a little garden pavilion there, for which he commissioned eight Royal Academicians to design frescoes. This building later "fell into such poor condition through damp and neglect that it was demolished in 1928" (Rhodes James). But Albert was completely insensitive to the charm of a far more important Pavilion, the Prince Regent's at Brighton, which he "systematically stripped of its valuables" and was prepared to leave to its fate. Only local sentiment saved it from destruction.

Peel asked Albert to be president of the Fine Arts Commission, an appointment which gave him great pleasure

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because it brought him into contact with the sort of people who most interested him. He became deeply involved in plans for the new Palace of Westminster, and organised a competition in which many artists submitted cartoons for frescoes to decorate it. The cartoons were exhibited in Westminster Hall and during the eight weeks they were on show more than half a million people came to see them. First prize went to Armitage's *Caesar's Invasion of Britain*, second to Watts's *Caractacus Led in Triumph through the Streets of Rome*, and third to Cope's *First Trial by Jury*. Artistically the results may have been rather disappointing, but the competition "unquestionably stimulated public taste" (Fulford). (For fascinating glimpses of Victorian painters, sculptors and engravers—and their models, wives, mistresses, dealers and patrons—one can turn to the 425 illustrations in Jeremy Maas's *The Victorian Art World in Photographs*.[3] But again Turner is conspicuously absent.)

Miss Hobhouse describes Albert's death (from typhoid) as "serene and Christian", but neither she nor Mr Rhodes James has much to say about his religious beliefs or his attitude to Church matters. Yet he was thoroughly *enfant du siècle* in his preoccupation with religion, and unfortunately his spiritual outlook was by no means free from sectarian partisanship. A robust Lutheran, he was almost obsessively anti-Polish and therefore very hostile to the Oxford Movement. At least two recommendations to bishoprics for which he was largely responsible were resented as Low Church aggression by the High Church party, and caused prolonged and sulphurous controversy.

His own form of Christianity was sincerely and strongly—perhaps too strongly—held. Victoria's governess, Baroness Lehzen, whose hold over her he had some difficulty in breaking after their marriage, disapproved of his practice of reading religious books to her on Sundays. But he established this as a regular routine and would read from Dr Arnold's sermons or other works with a markedly Evangelical flavour. Fulford argues that "the twenty years' period of his sojourn in England was an almost exclusively clerical age which, by itself, created a barrier between him and the English." But there would have been much less trouble if his own attitude in ecclesiastical affairs had been more tolerant. It was not the speculative side of his mind (which responded so warmly to Tennyson's *In Memoriam*), but rather the doctrinaire side, that brought him inevitably into conflict with those who were equally doctrinaire about religion though with a different perception of revealed truth.

Yet in many ways he was quite a tolerant character; certainly more so than his wife, and not least as a parent. Both Miss Hobhouse and Mr Rhodes James suggest that he was fundamentally more understanding than she was of their eldest son, the future Edward VII. Though he must share responsibility for the unsuitable education to which the boy was subjected, he was very fond of him—as of all his children—and both authors believe that, if he had survived, father and son would probably have got on well. Sadly, his last illness coincided with the brouhaha over the Prince of Wales's youthful affair with the actress Nellie Clifden, and the Queen was able to convince herself that he was largely to blame for his father's death. "It is significant", writes Mr Rhodes James, "that Bertie's abject and heartfelt contrition made amends so far as Albert was concerned, but his mother was not so forgiving." And Miss Hobhouse makes an ever harsher judgment. Bertie

> "suffered all his life from the unhappy coincidence that his father's death came at a moment of extreme family tension generated by a stupid indiscretion on his part. This enabled his mother to justify her natural jealousy of the Heir Apparent in a morbid reference to his father's death."

It was not, by the way, a mark of mere prudery in Albert that he was so upset by the Clifden affair. Cleaning up the Court and establishing the Monarchy as an example of decent living had, indeed, been one of his most cherished aims, but he had a personal as well as a public reason for dreading the possible effect of sexual adventures upon his son. He was himself the child of a broken home. His father had been a lecher, and so was his brother (who had been made impotent by venereal disease). Albert was naturally on his guard against family tendencies which, he knew, could be ruinous if reproduced in the next generation.

As we look at his character in all its aspects, we can see that

[3] *The Victorian Art World in Photographs*. By Jeremy Maas. Barrie & Jenkins, £20.00.

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he was the supreme manifestation of the Good German. Learned, artistic, industrious, idealistic, God-fearing, devoted to family and many high causes—few, if any, of the necessary qualifications were lacking. And some of the concomitant defects were there too, including a slightly over-serious approach to life and a not very subtle sense of humour. Though his self-dedication to his adopted country was as complete as mind and will could make it, his heart always remained in Germany. At the time of his engagement he wrote to his grandmother:

> "While I shall be untiring in my efforts and labours for the country to which I shall in future belong, and where I am called to so high a position, I shall never cease to be a true German, and a true Coburg and Gotha man."

After his death the Germany of which he was so fine a representative was unified, and at the same time subverted, by an evil genius. It was lucky for Albert that he did not live to witness the triumph of Bismarck.

Partly no doubt because he was so foreign, the English never really took to Albert. His great virtues were perhaps even more irritating than his comparatively petty faults. The English political establishment treated him, from the first, with insolence and suspicion. The Queen's attempt to have him made King Consort was as unsuccessful as Queen Anne's had been on behalf of Prince George of Denmark. (Has the present Queen made a similar request on behalf of Prince Philip, one wonders?) In the matter of finance Albert was far less handsomely treated than his predecessor. Whereas Prince George had received £100,000 a year, the proposed £50,000 for Albert was cut by Parliament to £30,000. As time went on the prejudice against him was a little softened, and the Great Exhibition won him a certain popularity (though not in smart circles), but it was only after his death that he was truly appreciated, and even then what people felt for him was gratitude and a rather puzzled admiration rather than love.

Miss Hobhouse gives an interesting account of the many memorials to him throughout the country, but she notes that the statue of him in Cambridge—for whose university he did wonders as Chancellor—has been moved to Madingley, "scene of one of the unhappier moments of the Prince's life", where, already mortally ill, he visited his eldest son to discuss the Clifden affair, and where his statue, "unprotected", now "greens quietly by the lake." Perhaps the present MP for Cambridge, who is none other than Robert Rhodes James, will contrive to have it restored to a place of honour in the city.

Can We Interest You in God?

"Do you have a Bible in the house?"
"My husband has written a new version
thank you", she says, and firmly shuts the door.
Craning over the banister, I'm proud.
Could your mum come up with a line like that?

"See me afterwards, I'll tell you my method",
the chaplain says. So I go. "Leaving us soon
for the big world, are you? Remember God.
Where to now?" "A month or so in Paris
before I go up." (I'm pleased with that last phrase.)
"Er . . . take this *A Prayer a Day* . . . try not to . . . ."

What's he thinking of? The *Moulin Rouge*?
Plastic macs in the Latin Quarter?
That's nothing on the boy at school
found naked under another boy's bed: "O Sir,
you see Sir, I lost my way to the loo."
He was expelled for that caper.

My dad's *The Holy Bible in Brief*—
I don't think he believed a word of it:
he cut out the difficult bits
and stuck to the story. Never mind the meaning.

Gareth Reeves

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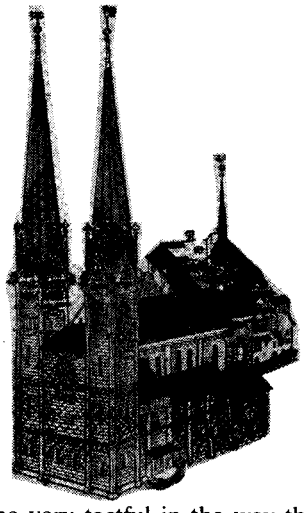
EAST & WEST

A Religious Odyssey

Richer by Poland

By Mary Kenny



ANYONE PAYING A visit to Poland is advised to take gifts of tea, coffee, and chocolate. These items are either expensive or rationed for a Pole unpossessed of dollars: coffee costs about £30 a kilo (the average wage is about £100 a month), and the principal way to qualify for a ration of chocolate is to become pregnant. "But", warned a Polish nobleman living in London, with whom I talked before going to Poland, "be very tactful in the way that you offer these gifts. Offer them as some amusing little thing from England, as you would take something *très Anglais*, *très typique*, to friends in France. The Poles are an immensely proud people who see themselves as the shieldbearers of European civilisation. They need these commodities desperately, but it is very humiliating for them to be put in the position of beggars. Don't be surprised if sometimes they accept gifts in an apparently offhand way. They don't like to show that they need them. . . ."

The gifts were, in fact, accepted with grace and natural good manners, and curiously it was I who felt somewhat humiliated. £45 worth of tea, coffee and chocolate costs me so little, in truth, and represents hardly a working day's revenue; and yet there it means so much. A dollar, to me, is less than a packet of cigarettes, less than a British Rail cup of coffee and a biscuit, less than a woman's magazine that I might flick through and throw aside. But a dollar in Poland is a magical item; it can get, and pay for, a taxi ride, when no taxis seem available; a meal when restaurants appear to have stopped serving. Money can, alas, buy a certain happiness. A dollar pressed into the hand of a poor person can produce shining eyes, tears, smiles. Seeing an old grandmother, sorrowful, badly dressed, eyes closed in supplicating prayer at Czestochowa, I felt the urge to press a five-dollar note into her hand. I shall not forget the look in her eyes when she saw it. It was as though a miracle had happened. I was glad that I did it, but humbled by the experience, uncomfortable at the thought that what is worth so little in my terms can be worth so much to her. And I felt worried, too, that the experience of giving money might be in some sense corrupting—corrupting to me.

Yet after eight days in Poland, in which I travelled over 800 kilometres through the country, I came back to England feeling as though I had been on a spiritual odyssey. The impact that the country had on me was extraordinarily spiritual; I have never before been so proud of being a Catholic, never before felt that sense of continuity with the historic, cultural Catholicism of the Middle Ages, never before sensed the kind of piety that suffuses the whole atmosphere of Poland. The Church in Poland is so full of paradoxes, so traditional in its rite, so conventional in appearance—nuns and priests look like nuns and priests, in full pre-Vatican-II rig. Mass is long, sonorous, performed with all regalia—never quick, casual, and ordinary. Penitents kneel with head bowed before the confessional, Communion is taken in the old way—kneeling, and in the mouth—not standing and in the hand, as it is now in the West. And yet for all this appearance of being historic, rigid, controlled, the Catholic Church is in another sense—in, I think, the best sense—progressive, humanitarian, liberal; it is the seat of learning, the source of enlightenment, the beacon of freedom, the champion of personal liberty. It is everything that it is seen *not* to be in the West. I have grown wearily accustomed to being regarded as a reactionary, a right-wing hysteric, a repressive authoritarian in England because I am a Catholic; Catholicism is synonymous, in the Western culture, with such notions. How surprising, how refreshing to find, in Poland, that being a Catholic is associated with freedom of thought—not with the mind control or intellectual restrictions with which the Catholic tradition is marked among Anglo-Saxons in England and America. In Poland, the Catholic regains that sense of dignity whereby the faith is linked with humanism, scholarship and social help.

This is manifest in the most concrete everyday examples of how people live. Contraception is primitive in Poland—as it is in almost all Communist countries. There is only one form of contraceptive pill, a high-hormone dosage of the sort now regarded critically in the West—thought to be, indeed, dangerous for the health of women. Barrier methods are crude, badly-made.

Communism, of course, is markedly male-chauvinist—a point which seems to escape the Left-wing feminists in the West. "Contraception costs foreign currency", the Editor-in-Chief of the Party newspaper *Gazeta Krakowska*, Dr Slawomir Tabkowski, told me. "It is just not a priority for our country." The health of women is somehow just not very important in Communist countries; the USSR has the highest rate of post-abortion infection in the developed world and the rate of perinatal deaths is now as high as in the Third World.

So who instructs women about their bodies in Poland? The Church. The Catholic Church, foe of the birth-control movement, universal adversary of abortion, stickler in the matter of the natural law of fertility regulation, most resolute reactionary in the matter of sexuality—this is the agency in Poland which provides women with instruction on family planning! Granted, it is "natural" family planning—that is, fertility control through the regulation of the menstrual cycle, which is usually seen in the West as being unreliable, and requiring too much self-control. "But at least, in these family planning groups run by the Church a woman can learn about how her body works",

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a young farmer's wife told me. "At least you can find out something about the ways of sexuality, and how to maintain your body without using pills or rubber items which are so difficult to come by, or so crude that no one would use them. . . ."

Abortion is, of course, high in Poland, as in all Communist countries; though—with Japan—it is the only country in the world where the numbers of abortions have shown a trend downwards in recent years. It is logical to suppose that it is the Church's opposition to abortion that has galvanised this effort to provide birth-control advice, albeit of natural methods only. But any reasonable person must conclude that Church-run family-planning organisations are better than no assistance at all, and in the face of the curious prudery which marks Communist régimes—and the lack of care for the health of women and their babies—this form of sex education is helpful and indeed truly "progressive."

SUCH PARADOXES ABOUND. At Opole in Western Poland, the local bishop, Bishop Nossel, spoke with enthusiasm of the writings of Hans Küng and Dr John Robinson. ("Such a wonderful Christologist!" beamed Bishop Nossel, speaking of Dr Robinson.) In the West, Hans Küng is frequently deemed "controversial", and Catholics make jokes about his apparent anti-Papal writings—"the Protestant theologian", they call him. As for John Robinson (who died recently), many Anglicans are scandalised by his maverick statements, his challenging of the divinity of Jesus Christ, his curious advocacy, back in the 1960s, of freer sexuality for young teenagers. In England and America, these theologians are seen as dissidents within Christianity, challenging the doctrines and order of the canons of the law. In Poland, they are viewed as exciting, interesting, exploratory. Because, in a sense, the Poles are so secure in their faith, they are not made nervous by adventurous theological themes. Because we are so insecure, we are more easily rattled. We cannot allow much that might undermine Christianity for fear the whole structure will fall apart. They can allow anything in the way of religious exploratory thought because they are so sure of the foundations.

IT IS AT THE Catholic University of Lublin that this picture of faith and freedom is crystallised. This is Poland's only independent university and the only Catholic University between Louvain in the West and Tokyo in the East. Established in 1938, it contains 3,000 students and a teaching staff of 400; it is run entirely by donations. Five times a year the University asks the people of Poland to contribute to its upkeep, and five times a year they give their zlotys.

A little help comes from the United States, a little from Canada, Italy, West Germany, and Australia; not much from Britain. The British Foreign Office likes to keep its bib clean with General Jaruzelski's régime and does not like to be seen to dabble in anything that might upset that delicate relationship. When the University applied to the British Council, offshoot of the Foreign Office, for a native English speaker to teach at the English department there, it was refused on the grounds, apparently, that it was not politic. In fact, the University itself maintains an extremely prudent and careful policy with regard to Warsaw: the understanding is that Warsaw does not interfere with the University, and the University does not interfere with Warsaw. In order to survive, it is necessary to keep this distance, to be silent when silence is demanded, to remain on the other side of what is deemed to be politics.

Within the University, the visitor is aware of this cautious attitude, underscored, sometimes, by an ironic, circumlocutory way of speaking. To the unvarnished question, "Are you afraid of a Russian invasion?", one don replied in a telling tone of voice, "How could we be afraid of our *friends*, our comrades in the East?" Apprehension of their "friends" is evident among the Poles, even among—perhaps especially among—members of the Communist Party (which is reckoned, by a French study, to be about 3% of the population). "We only hold the breach to save Poland from our friends", a weary Communist told me. "We are here to be the lesser of two evils."

The State—though doubtless keeping a surveillant eye on underground *Solidarity* activities—officially remains apart from the University of Lublin, and never officially visits, or sends external examiners. The curriculum is free from and neutral towards State ideology: it aims to be liberal and eclectic. During the period of Martial Law, all university studies were suspended, but since then a quiet resumption of work has taken place. Letters, Humanities, Philology, History, Economics, Philosophy, Mathematics are taught; Greek and Latin, German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian language departments exist. There is a library with more than a million books—many painstakingly acquired by gradual collection, purchased with precious dollars when they are available—and with 1,700 periodicals from abroad. And of course

"Little Latin, No Greek"

Rome

A POLE *who passed himself off as a bishop for two months in Rome has been exposed because he was a dunce at Latin.*

"I'm a friend of the Pope's", he would say as he swept into churches in Bishop's cassock, purple cap and sash. And nobody questioned that "His Grace, the Right Reverend Stanislaus Lukowski" was from a diocese near Krakow, where Pope John Paul II was cardinal-archbishop.

The imposing figure with blond hair and impeccable Polish got himself invited to lunches and dinners. Soon he was being feted by the Camillian Order near the Vatican where he celebrated mass every day with his "secretary."

But at one banquet after he apologised for his crude Italian, a Polish priest translated. A Dutch bishop suggested they all speak Latin.

The guest's Latin just wasn't up to it. His hosts became suspicious and made discreet inquiries.

When he showed up next day he was arrested. Lukowski, 42, admitted fraudulent impersonation and misuse of titles and honours. His "secretary" turned out to be a waiter.

DAILY MAIL

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there are theological studies, with a seminary that is part of the university, with 200 priests in training.

Extra-mural activities are slight. University debates are not a feature in any Iron Curtain country, and socialising is not considered a goal of university life. A student is privileged to be there to study, and study they do. "There is a marked sense of application among the students", says Dr Edmund Gussmann, the head of the English department, who has also taught in State universities. "They *do* think themselves lucky to be here—that it is a special opportunity." Academically, the standards of the Catholic University of Lublin are respected, and again, paradoxically, the education received there is admirably broad. In State universities, economics means Marxist economics only; linguistics—only Marxist linguistics; history is Marxist history. At Lublin, the whole range of economics can be studied, from Adam Smith to Marx, from Ricardo to Keynes.

Within the structures of Marxism, there are quirky, forbidden areas. Atonal music, for example, is regarded as decadent (a judgment with which some of us might feel tempted to agree). But if a student wishes to research atonal music, he can do so at Lublin. The most recondite areas of scholarship are explored: one don taught himself the Irish language, simply because he is intrigued by Celtic literature—and did so from a tiny collection of Irish-language books, which are difficult to come by in southern Poland. Yet it is impressive to see that the desire for learning and for scholarship is so strong that such a feat is possible, with so little source material. Truly, when men and women have to struggle for something precious, it becomes more precious still; and in Poland, one feels, learning is something to be valued. As with the matter of money, I felt ashamed that we, who have such unlimited access to intellectual richness, benefit from it so little. All the books in the world are at our fingertips without restraint, and what do we do? Watch *Dallas* on television.

THE UNIVERSITY is peppered, too, with nuns studying theology, philosophy and languages. Poland is the only Western country which has practically as many women in religious life today as it had in 1955: 25,591 in 1955; 24,948 in 1983—plus over 2,000 Polish sisters on missions in Africa and Latin America.

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Nuns in Poland are light years away from their Anglo-American sisters; in the West, the feminist movement has infected the convents with a strong force. Habits have been discarded, more freedom and autonomy has been sought, and nuns are laying claim to equality with priests. America in particular is producing a stream of "radical nuns": nuns who want to be priests, nuns involved in Left-wing peace movements, nuns who wear blue-jeans. Of course, there has always been an element of feminism, however covert, in the convent (as Kate Millett recognised from the first in her influential work, *Sexual Politics*). The nuns of the Middle Ages were often great abbesses, fierce battleaxes who ran estates and managed lands and communities. The nun can be a woman who shows that marriage and motherhood are not the only role for women; she can be an intellectual, a doctor of the church, a social reformer, an evangelist. In the West there has been a flight from convents in recent years, but among those sisters who have stayed in religious life there is a resurgence of the domineering medieval abbess in the idiom of the present time, which must be some form of feminism.

In Poland, feminism has made no impact at all—neither among secular women, nor among religious sisters. Among lay women, it seems largely to be regarded as a product of Western affluence. Polish women do not have the time or the leisure to reflect about their identity, their "identity crises", or their role choices; and they do not have the inclination to form Peace Movements, since most Poles are suspicious that the Peace Movement is something manipulated by "our friends in the East." It has to be said, too, that since the 19th century there has been a tradition of education for women in Poland, so women do not feel cheated of intellectual development on that score.

Similarly, Polish nuns are not at all affected by the Western movements of "nuns' liberation." They laugh merrily at the suggestion that nuns might become priests; it strikes them as unnatural. Men and women are different, they feel, and that is a normal theme in religious life as it is in the secular world. This may have something to do with the reality that Poland is not short of priests, by our standards—there are enough men entering the seminaries to fulfil the priestly office (one priest for every 1,800 parishioners). It also may have something to do with what we call job satisfaction. "When you become a nun in Poland, you're respected for doing something patriotic", one young sister from Bialystock explained. Nobody thinks that a woman entering a convent is "wasting her life", or missing out on "essential pleasures", since the life of a married woman can be more stressful, more taxing than that of a nun—at least in terms of the everyday realities of standing in line for food, coping with tiny flats, worrying about the family. Nuns feel really needed in Poland; needed in the huge network of supportive work that the Church carries out, needed in the care of the handicapped, and sorely needed in medical work. The nun's positive self-image might, too, have something to do with the obsessive adulation of the Virgin Mary. In churches a male priesthood celebrates Mass before an altar which usually displays an all-powerful icon of Mary, and this is the psychological balance in the mystical state of Poland: a male priesthood serving a woman godhead: man doing, woman being.

It is all very traditional in its symmetry, and quite removed

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from our perception of the male-female relationship, which we strive to see as co-equal, not complementary. "In your heart", I asked a priest at Lublin, "don't you, truthfully, regard nuns as lesser beings, as handmaidens to the masculine priesthood?"

"Our foremost teacher of Moral Philosophy is a nun", he replied. "You do not regard a moral philosopher as some little handmaiden."

That reply taught me something: it may well be education, learning, the development of thought which is woman's most effective road to equality. Our ways of thinking about equality in the West are suffused with philistinism (rubbish about the right to wear trousers); vulgarity (idiocies about the right to be sexually unconstrained); materialism (quarrels about money and shares and the allocation of revenue). In their context, such claims may have their place, but what shall it benefit us if we wind up with all the signs of equality and remain watching TV soap-operas moronically?

POLAND TAUGHT ME much. At one point it would, I thought, be easy to fall into the trap of imagining that Communism had done much for Catholicism, and for the Catholic way of freedom as perceived in Poland—freedom of thought, of individual dignity, freedom of the person, which is such a thematic note in Pope John Paul II's speeches. Communism had done this . . . by eliciting from the Church a moral and psychological opposition. But that would be wrong, because in Eastern Europe the visitor is acutely aware of being surrounded by societies where Christianity (and Judaism for that matter—and indeed even Islam, not so far away) is brutally repressed by Communism: Lithuania, 90% Catholic and methodically quashed; the Ukraine, still a religious society where free worship has been horribly persecuted; Czechoslovakia, where Christianity is intolerably treated; Romania, where an active underground church survives only in the face of torment.

True, both Hungary and Yugoslavia have some measures of religious tolerance. But, on the whole, it would be a falsity to imagine that the totalitarian states aid religious freedom even through the *esprit de contradiction*: Communism seeks to stamp out faith, which is its adversary. It is just that in Poland, the hold of the new Communist state is so weak, and the old faith of the people so strong, that the powers of dark control have found no means, yet, to prevail.

AUTHORS

Jorge Ibargüengoitia was born in 1928 in Guanahato, a small mining town in Central Mexico. He made his name as a playwright, but in 1963 turned to fiction and by the time of his tragic death last year in the Madrid plane crash had published a volume of short stories and five novels. *The Dead Girls*, which appeared last year, was his first work to be translated into English "Margarita's Marriage" is an extract from *Two Crimes*, to be published by Avon Books in New York, and in London by Chatto & Windus, who will bring out hardback and paperback editions early in August.

Edward Blishen's autobiographical works range from his descriptions of life as a schoolteacher—*Roaring Boys* (1955) and *This Right Soft Lot* (1969)—to a superb memoir of his mother—*Lizzie Pye* (1982). His most recent book, *Donkey Work*, was published in 1983 by Hamish Hamilton, who later this year bring out *A Second Skin*.

Kenneth Minogue is Reader in Political Science at the London School of Economics. He is the author of *The Liberal Mind* (1963), *Nationalism* (1967), and *The Concept of a University* (1973), and co-editor of *Contemporary British Philosophers* (Methuen, 1976). His latest book, *History's Dirty Trick: The Pure Theory of Ideology*, will be published this autumn by Weidenfeld.

Peter Porter's *Collected Poems* were published last year by Oxford University Press.

George Szirtes' most recent book of poems is *Short Wave* (Secker & Warburg, 1984).

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph* in London, and author of *The Senate of Lilliput* (Faber, 1983).

François Bondy is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich).

Mary Midgley is former Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. She is the author of *Beast and Man* (1979; paper, Methuen 1980), *Heart and Mind* (1981; paper, Methuen 1983), and *Animals and Why They Matter* (1983)—all published in hardback by Harvester Press—and co-author of *Women's Choices* (Weidenfeld, 1983).

John Mole's new collection of poems, *In and Out of the Apple*, is to be published in June by Secker & Warburg.

David Pryce-Jones is the author of a biography of Unity Mitford (n.e. Star Books, 1981). His historical study *Paris in the Third Reich* and his biography of Cyril Connolly were published by Collins in 1981 and 1983 respectively.

John Grigg is the author, among other books, of a two-volume biography of Lloyd George (Eyre Methuen, 1973, 1978), which won the 1978 Whitbread Award, and a biography of Nancy Astor (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980).

Mary Kenny is a television critic for the *Daily Mail* and writes a column for the Women's Page of the *Sunday Telegraph*. She has published a book about working mothers, *Woman Times Two* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1978), and a book of "amateur theology"—*Why Christianity Works* (Michael Joseph, 1981). Her study *Abortion: The Whole Story* was published last year by Chatto & Windus.

Milton Friedman began pondering the problem of "Jews & Capitalism" more than a decade ago, and when we read his first draft we asked him to let us publish it. He was reluctant, and in the intervening years revised his 1972 manuscript, which had been given as his presidential address to the Mont Pelerin Society. It will be published in book form later this year as a paper in *The Morality of the Marketplace: Religious Implications*, edited by Walter Block, Geoffrey Brennan, and Kenneth Elzinga (The Fraser Institute, Vancouver).

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DISCUSSION

Capitalism & the Jews

Confronting a Paradox—By MILTON FRIEDMAN

MY AIM is to examine a particular case of an historical and political paradox—the attitude of Jews toward capitalism. Two propositions can be readily demonstrated: first, the Jews owe an enormous debt to free enterprise and competitive capitalism; second, for at least the past century the Jews have been consistently opposed to capitalism and have done much on an ideological level to undermine it. How can these propositions be reconciled?

I was led to examine this paradox partly for obvious personal reasons. I am accustomed to being a member of an intellectual minority, to be accused by fellow intellectuals of being a reactionary or an apologist or plain nuts. But those of us who are also Jewish are even more embattled, being regarded not only as intellectual deviants but also as traitors to a supposed cultural and national tradition.

This personal interest was reinforced by the hope that study of this special case might offer a clue to a more general paradox —typified by post-war West Germany and its flourishing capitalism where Jews play a minor role, yet where the intellectual climate is largely collectivist. Unfortunately, that hope has not been fulfilled. I believe that I can explain to a very large extent the anti-capitalist tendency among Jews, but the most important elements of the explanation are peculiar to the special case and cannot readily be generalised. I trust that others will be more successful.

1. The Benefit Jews Have Derived from Capitalism

LET ME START by briefly documenting the first proposition: that the Jews owe an enormous debt to capitalism. The feature of capitalism that has benefited the Jews has of course been competition.[1] Wherever there is monopoly, whether it be private or governmental, there is room for the application of arbitrary criteria in the selection of the beneficiaries of the monopoly—whether these criteria be colour of skin, religion, national origin, or whatnot. Where there is free competition, only performance counts. The market is colour-blind. No one who goes to the market to buy bread knows or cares whether the wheat was grown by a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, or atheist; by whites or blacks. Any miller who wishes to express his personal prejudices by buying only from preferred groups is at a competitive disadvantage, since he is keeping himself from buying from the cheapest source. He can express his prejudice, but he will have to do so at his own expense, accepting a lower monetary income than he could otherwise earn.

A personal experience illuminates sharply the importance of competition. A dozen years ago I attended the International Monetary Conference held in Montreal. The persons there consisted, on the one hand, of members of the Conference, who include the two top executives of the major commercial banks throughout the world; on the other, of persons like myself invited as speakers or participants in panel discussions. A conversation with an American banker present who recounted a tale of anti-Semitism in American banking led me to estimate roughly the fraction of the two groups who were Jewish. Of the first group—the bankers proper—I estimated that about 1% were Jewish. Of the much smaller second group, the invited participants in the programme, roughly 25% were Jewish.

Why the difference? Because banking today is everywhere monopolistic in the sense that there is not free entry. Government permission or a franchise is required. On the other hand, intellectual activity of the kind that would recommend persons for the programme is a highly competitive industry with almost completely free entry.

This example is particularly striking because banking is hardly a field, like, say, iron and steel, in which Jews have never played an important role. On the contrary, for centuries Jews were a major if not dominant element in banking and particularly in international banking. But when that was true, banking was an industry with rather free entry. Jews prospered in it for that reason and also because they had a comparative advantage arising from the Church's views on usury, the dispersion of Jews throughout the world, and their usefulness to ruling

[1] The only other writer I have come across who explicitly stresses the benefits Jews have derived from capitalism is Ellis Rivkin, *The Shaping of Jewish History* (New York, 1971). Unfortunately, Rivkin's interesting analysis is marred by misconceptions about the nature and operation of capitalism. He takes the accummulation of capital rather than free entry as its distinguishing feature.

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monarchs precisely because of the isolation of the Jews from the rest of the community.[2]

The anecdote illuminates much history. Throughout the nearly two thousand years of the Diaspora, Jews were repeatedly discriminated against, restricted in the activities they could undertake, on occasion expelled *en masse*, as in 1492 from Spain, and often the object of the extreme hostility of the peoples among whom they lived. They were able none the less to exist because of the absence of a totalitarian state, so that there were always some market elements, some activities open to them to enter. In particular, the fragmented political structure and the numerous separate sovereignties meant that international trade and finance in particular escaped close control, which is why Jews were so prominent in this area. It is no accident that Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, the two most totalitarian societies in the past 2,000 years (modern China perhaps excepted), also offer the most extreme examples of official and effective anti-Semitism.

If we come to more recent times, Jews have flourished most in those countries in which competitive capitalism had the greatest scope: Holland in the 16th and 17th centuries, and Britain and the US in the 19th and 20th centuries, Germany in the late 19th and 20th centuries—a case that is particularly pertinent when that period is compared with the Hitler period.[3] Moreover, within those countries, Jews have flourished most in the sectors that have the freest entry and are in that sense most competitive. Compare the experience of the Jews in banking, that I have referred to, with their experience in retail trade, which has been almost a prototype of the textbook image of perfect competition and free entry. Or compare their minor role in large industry with their prominence in the professions such as law, medicine, accountancy and the like.[4] Though there were barriers to entry in the professions too, once past the initial barriers there is a large measure of free competition for custom. Even the differences within the professions illustrate my theme. In the US, for which I know the details, there was for a long time a major difference between medicine and law in the extent to which state licensure was an effective bar to entry. For reasons that are not relevant here, there was significant restriction of entry in medicine, relatively little in law. And Jews were proportionately much more numerous in law than in medicine.

The movie industry in the US was a new industry and for that reason open to all. Jews became a major factor and this carried over to radio and television when they came on the scene. But now that government control and regulation have become more and more important, I am under the impression that the Jewish role in radio and TV is declining.

A rather different example of the benefits Jews have derived from competitive capitalism is provided by Israel, and this in a dual sense.

First, Israel would hardly have been viable without the massive contributions that it received from world Jewry, primarily from the US, secondly from Britain and other Western capitalist countries. Suppose these countries had been socialist. The hypothetical socialist countries might conceivably have contributed, but if so they would have done so for very different reasons and with very different conditions attached. Compare Soviet aid to Egypt or official US aid to Israel with private contributions. In a capitalist system, any group, however small a minority, can use its own resources as it wishes, without seeking or getting the permission of the majority.

Second, within Israel, despite all the talk of central control, the reality is that rapid development has been primarily the product of private initiative. After my first extended visit to Israel several decades ago, I concluded that two traditions were at work in Israel: an ancient one, going back nearly two thousand years, of finding ways around governmental restrictions; a modern one, going back a century, of belief in "democratic socialism" and "central planning." Fortunately for Israel, the first tradition has proved far more potent than the second.

To SUMMARISE: Except for the sporadic protection of individual monarchs to whom they were useful, Jews have seldom benefited from governmental intervention on their behalf. They have flourished when and only when there has been a widespread acceptance by the public at large of the general doctrine of non-intervention, so that a large measure of competitive capitalism and of tolerance for all groups has prevailed. They have flourished then despite continued widespread anti-Semitic prejudice because the general belief in non-intervention was more powerful than the specific urge to discriminate against the Jews.

2. *The Anti-Capitalist Mentality of the Jews*

DESPITE THIS RECORD, for the past century, the Jews have been a stronghold of anti-capitalist sentiment. From Karl Marx through Leon Trotsky to Herbert Marcuse, a sizeable fraction of the revolutionary anti-capitalist literature has been written by Jews. Communist Parties in all countries, including the Party that achieved revolution in Russia but also present-day Communist Parties in Western countries, and especially in the US, have been run and manned to a disproportionate extent by Jews—though I hasten to add that only a tiny fraction of Jews have ever been members of the Communist Party.[5] Jews have been equally active in the less-revolutionary socialist movements in all countries, as intellectuals generating socialist literature, as active participants in leadership, and as members.

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[2] See, for example, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), on "court Jews"; also Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (tr. 1913).

[3] Sombart argues that the relation is the reverse: that capitalism flourished where it did because Jews were given a considerable measure of freedom. But he would not have denied that the relation is reciprocal. And his version has been seriously questioned by economic historians. See Introduction by Bert F. Hoselitz to American edition of Sombart's book, *Jewish Contributions to Civilization* (1919), ch. viia, pp. 247–267.

[4] See Nathaniel Weyl, *The Creative Elite in America* (1966), particularly the tables in Appendix III giving results for different "élite rosters."

[5] For the US, see Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (1961), pp. 85, 130, 132. See also Jacob L. Talmon's essay on "Jews between Revolution and Counter-Revolution" in his *Israel among the Nations* (1970), pp. 26–81.

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Coming still closer to the centre, in Britain the Jewish vote and participation is predominantly in the Labour Party; in the US, in the left wing of the Democratic Party. The party programmes of the so-called Right-wing parties in Israel would be regarded as "liberal", in the economic sense, almost everywhere else. These phenomena are so well-known that they require little elaboration or documentation.[6]

3. Why the Anti-Capitalist Mentality?

HOW CAN WE reconcile my two propositions? Why is it that despite the historical record of the benefits of competitive capitalism to the Jews, despite the intellectual explanation of this phenomenon that is implicit or explicit in all liberal literature from at least Adam Smith on, the Jews have been disproportionately anti-capitalist?

We may start by considering some simple yet inadequate answers. Lawrence Fuchs, in a highly superficial analysis of *The Political Behavior of American Jews*, argues that the anti-capitalism of the Jews is a direct reflection of values derived from the Jewish religion and culture. He goes so far as to say (p. 197):

> "if the communist movement is in a sense a Christian heresy, it is also Jewish orthodoxy—not the totalitarian or revolutionary aspects of world communism, but the quest for social justice through social action."

Needless to say—a point I shall return to later in a different connection—Fuchs himself is a liberal in the American sense. He regards the political liberalism of the Jews in this sense as a virtue, and hence is quick to regard such liberalism as a legitimate offspring of the Jewish values of learning, charity, and concern with the pleasures of this world. He never even recognises, let alone discusses, the key question whether the ethical end of "social justice through social action" is consistent with the political means of centralised government.

This explanation can be dismissed out-of-hand. Jewish religion and culture date back over two millennia; the Jewish opposition to capitalism and attachment to socialism, at the most, less than two centuries. Only after the Enlightenment, and then primarily among the Jews who were breaking away from the Jewish religion, did this political stance emerge. Werner Sombart, in his important and controversial book *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (first published in 1911), makes a far stronger case that Jewish religion and culture implied a capitalist outlook than Fuchs does that it implied a socialist outlook. Sombart wrote:

> "throughout the centuries, the Jews championed the cause of individual liberty in economic activity against the dominating views of the time. The individual was not to be hampered by regulations of any sort. . . . I think that the Jewish religion has the same leading ideas as capitalism. . . . The whole religious system is in reality nothing but a contract between Jehovah and his chosen people. . . . God promises something and gives something, and the righteous must give Him something in return. Indeed, there was no community of interest between God and man which could not be expressed in these terms—that man performs some duty enjoined by the Torah and receives from God a *quid pro quo*."

Sombart goes on to discuss the attitude toward riches and poverty in the Old and the New Testament.

> "You will find a few passages [in the Old Testament and the Talmud] wherein poverty is lauded as something nobler and higher than riches. But on the other hand you will come across hundreds of passages in which riches are called the blessing of the Lord, and only their misuse or their dangers warned against."

By contrast, Sombart refers to the famous passage in the New Testament, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God", and remarks,

> "as often as riches are lauded in the Old Testament, they are damned in the New. . . . The religion of the Christians stands in the way of their economic activities. . . . The Jews were never faced with this hindrance."

He concludes:

> "Free trade and industrial freedom were in accordance with Jewish law, and therefore in accordance with God's will."[7]

Sombart's book, I may say, has in general had a highly unfavourable reception among both economic historians in general and Jewish intellectuals in particular, and indeed, something of an aura of anti-Semitism has come to be attributed to it. Much of the criticism seems valid but there is nothing in the book itself to justify any charge of anti-Semitism though there certainly is in Sombart's behaviour and writings several decades later. Indeed, if anything I interpret the book as philo-Semitic. I regard the violence of the reaction of Jewish intellectuals to the book as itself a manifestation of the Jewish anti-capitalist mentality. I shall return to this point later.

A MORE BALANCED JUDGMENT than either Fuchs's or Sombart's, and one with which I am in full accord, is rendered by Nathan Glazer, who writes,

> "It is hard to see direct links with Jewish tradition in these attitudes. . . . One thing is sure: it is an enormous oversimplification to say Jews in Eastern Europe became socialists and anarchists because the Hebrew prophets had denounced injustice twenty-five hundred years ago. . . . The Jewish religious tradition probably does dispose Jews, in some subtle way, toward liberalism and radicalism, but it is not easy to see in present-day Jewish social attitudes the heritage of the Jewish religion."[8]

[6] For the American record, see Werner Cohn, *Sources of American Jewish Liberalism—A Study of the Political Alignments of American Jews* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New School for Soviet Research, June 1956); Lawrence Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (1956); Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (1957); Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (2nd ed. 1970).

[7] Werner Sombart, *The Jews in Modern Capitalism*, pp. 153, 205, 209, 216, 221–2,248.

[8] Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism*, pp. 135–6, 139.

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A second simple explanation is that the Jewish anti-capitalist mentality simply reflects the general tendency for intellectuals to be anti-capitalist plus the disproportionate representation of Jews among intellectuals. For example, Nathan Glazer says,

> "The general explanations for this phenomenon [the attachment of the major part of the intelligentsia to the Left] are well known. Freed from the restraints of conservative and traditional thinking, the intelligentsia finds it easier to accept revolutionary thinking, which attacks the established order of things in politics, religion, culture, and society. . . . Whatever it is that affected intellectuals, also affected Jews."[9]

Glazer goes on, however, to qualify greatly this interpretation by citing some factors that affected Jews differently from other intellectuals. This explanation undoubtedly has more validity than Fuchs's simpleminded identification of anti-capitalism with Jewish religion and culture. As the West German example mentioned earlier suggests, non-Jewish intellectuals are capable of becoming dominantly collectivist. And there is no doubt that the intellectual forces Glazer refers to affected Jewish intellectuals along with non-Jewish. However, the explanation seems highly incomplete in two respects. First, my impression is that a far larger percentage of Jewish intellectuals than of non-Jewish have been collectivist. Second, and more important, this explanation does not account for the different attitudes of the great mass of Jews and non-Jews who are not intellectuals. To explain this difference we must dig deeper.

A THIRD SIMPLE EXPLANATION that doubtless has some validity is the natural tendency for all of us to take the good things that happen to us for granted but to attribute any bad things to evil men or an evil system. Competitive capitalism has permitted Jews to flourish economically and culturally because it has prevented anti-Semites from imposing their values on others, and from discriminating against Jews at other people's expense. But the other side of that coin is that it protects anti-Semites in the expression of their anti-Semitism in their personal behaviour so long as they do it at their own expense. Competitive capitalism has therefore not eliminated social anti-Semitism. The free competition of ideas that is the natural companion of competitive capitalism might in time lead to a change in tastes and values that would eliminate social anti-Semitism, but there is no assurance that it will. As the New Testament puts it, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

No doubt, Jews have reacted in part by attributing the residual discrimination to "the System." But that hardly explains why the part of the "System" to which the discrimination has been attributed is "Capitalism." Why not, in 19th-century Britain, to the Established Church and the aristocracy; in 19th- and 20th-century Germany, to the bureaucracy; and in the 20th-century US, to the social rather than economic establishment? After all, Jewish history surely offers more than ample evidence that anti-Semitism has no special connection with a market economy. So this explanation, too, is unsatisfactory.

I COME NOW TO two explanations that seem to me much more fundamental. The first explanation, which has to do with the particular circumstances in Europe and in the 19th century, I owe to the extremely perceptive analysis of Werner Cohn in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis on the "Sources of American Jewish Liberalism."[10] Cohn points out that:

> "Beginning with the era of the French revolution, the European political spectrum became divided into a 'Left' and a 'Right' along an axis that involved the issue of secularism. The Right (conservative, monarchical, 'clerical') maintained that there must be a place for the Church in the public order; the Left (democratic, liberal, radical) held that there can be no (public) Church at all. . . .
>
> The axis separating Left from Right also formed a natural boundary for the pale of Jewish political participation. It was the Left, with its new secular concept of citizenship, that had accomplished the Emancipation, and it was only the Left that could see a place for the Jews in public life. No Conservative party in Europe—from the bitterly hostile Monarchists in Russia through the strongly Christian "noines" in France to the amiable Tories in England—could reconcile itself to full Jewish political equality. Jews supported the Left, then, not only because they had become unshakeable partisans of the Emancipation, but also because they had no choice; as far as the internal life of the Right was concerned, the Emancipation had never taken place, and the Christian religion remained a prerequisite for political participation."

Note in this connection that the only major leaders of Conservative Parties who were of Jewish origin—Benjamin Disraeli in England, Friedrich Julius Stahl in Germany—were both professing Christians (Disraeli's father was converted, Stahl was baptised at the age of 19).

Cohn goes on to distinguish between two strands of Leftism: "rational" or "intellectual" and "radical." He remarks that

> "Radical Leftism . . . was the only political movement since the days of the Roman empire in which Jews could become the intellectual brethren of non-Jews. . . . While intellectual Leftism was Christian at least in the sense of recognizing the distinction between 'religious' and 'secular', radical Leftism —eschatological socialism in particular—began to constitute itself as a new religious faith in which no separation between the sacred and the profane was tolerated. . . . [intellectual Leftism] offered [the Jews] a wholly rational and superficial admission to the larger society, [radical Leftism] a measure of real spiritual community."

I share Glazer's comment on these passages: "I do not think anyone has come closer to the heart of the matter than has the author of these paragraphs." Cohn's argument goes far to explain the important role that Jewish intellectuals played in the Marxist and socialist movement, the almost universal acceptance of "democratic socialism" by the European Jews in the Zionist movement (particularly those who emigrated to Palestine), and the socialist sentiment among the German-Jewish immigrants to the United States of the mid-19th century and the much larger flood of East European Jews at the turn of the century.

[9] Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism*, pp. 166–167.

[10] See also, in ENCOUNTER, Werner Cohn's "The 'Aryans' of Jean-Paul Sartre" (December 1981).

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Yet by itself it is hard to accept Cohn's point as the whole explanation for the anti-capitalist mentality of the Jews. In the United States, from the beginning, the separation of Church and State was accepted constitutional doctrine. True, the initial upper class was Christian and Protestant, but that was true of the population as a whole. Indeed, the élite Puritan element was, if anything, pro-Semitic. As Sombart points out in reconciling his thesis about the role of Jews in capitalist development with Max Weber's about the role of "the Protestant Ethic" in capitalist development, the Protestants (and the Puritans especially) went back to the Old Testament for their religious inspiration and patterned themselves on the ancient Hebrews. Sombart asserts: "Puritanism *is* Judaism." Cohn too emphasises this phenomenon, pointing to Puritan tolerance toward Jews in the colonial era, despite their general intolerance toward other religious sects.[11]

To come down to more recent times in the United States, Theodore Roosevelt was highly popular among the Jews partly because of his willingness to object publicly to Russian *pogroms*. Outside of the closely-knit socialist community in New York most Jews probably were Republicans rather than Democrats until the 1920s, when first Al Smith and then Franklin Delano Roosevelt produced a massive shift to the Democrats from both the Right and the Left. The shift from the Left betokened a weakening of the European influence, rather than being a manifestation of it. Yet despite that weakening influence, the American Jewish community, which now consists largely of second- and third- (and later) generation Americans, retains its dominant leftish cast.

The final explanation that suggests itself is complementary to Cohn's yet not at all identical with it. To justify itself by more than the reference to the alleged role of the Jews in Christ's crucifixion, anti-Semitism produced a stereotype of the Jew as primarily interested in money, as a merchant or money-lender who put commercial interests ahead of human values, who was money-grasping, cunning, selfish and greedy, who would "*jew*" you down and insist on his pound of flesh. Jews could have reacted to this stereotype in two ways: first, by accepting the description but rejecting the values that regarded these traits as blameworthy; secondly, by accepting the values but rejecting the description. Had they adopted the first way, they could have stressed the benefits rendered by the merchant and by the money-lender. They could have recalled, perhaps, Bentham's comment that

> "the business of a money-lender . . . has nowhere nor at any time been a popular one. Those who have the resolution to sacrifice the present to the future, are natural objects of envy to those who have sacrificed the future to the present. The children who have eaten their cake are the natural enemies of the children who have theirs. While the money is hoped for, and for a short time after it has been received, he who lends it is a friend and benefactor: by the time the money is spent, and the evil hour of reckoning is come, the benefactor is found to have changed his nature, and to have put on the tyrant and the oppressor. It is oppression for a man to reclaim his own money; it is none to keep it from him."[12]

Similarly, Jews could have noted that one man's selfishness is another man's self-reliance; one man's cunning, another's wisdom; one man's greed, another's prudence.

But this reaction was hardly to be expected. None of us can escape the intellectual air we breathe, can fail to be influenced by the values of the community in which we live. As Jews left the closed ghetto and *shtetl* and came into contact with the rest of the world, they inevitably came to accept and share the values of that world, the values that looked down on the "merely" commercial, that regarded money-lenders with contempt. They were led to say to themselves: if Jews are like that, the anti-Semites are right. . . .

The other possible reaction is to deny that Jews are like the stereotype, to set out to persuade oneself (and incidentally the anti-Semites) that far from being money-grasping, selfish, and heartless, Jews are really public-spirited, generous, and concerned with ideals rather than material goods. How better to do so than to attack the market with its reliance on monetary values and impersonal transactions and to glorify the political process, to take as an ideal a state run by well-meaning people for the benefit of their fellow men?

I was first led to this explanation of the anti-capitalist mentality of the Jews by my experience in Israel. After several months there, I came to the conclusion that the quickest way to reach a generalisation in any area about values in Israel was to ask what was true of the Jews in the Diaspora and reverse it.

Jews in the Diaspora were urban dwellers engaged in commercial pursuits and almost never in agriculture; in Israel, agriculture has much higher prestige than commerce.

Jews in the Diaspora shunned every aspect of military service; Israelis value the military highly and have demonstrated extraordinary competence.

These two reversals are readily explained as the children of necessity, but let me continue.

Yiddish or Ladino was the language of the Jews in the Diaspora; both are looked down on in Israel, where Hebrew is the national language.

Jews in the Diaspora stressed intellectual pursuits and rather looked down on athletics; there is tremendous emphasis on athletics in Israel.

And for what may seem like an irrelevant clincher: Jews in the Diaspora were reputed to be excellent cooks; cooking in Israel is generally terrible, in homes, hotels, and restaurants.

Can this record not be interpreted as an attempt, no doubt wholly subconscious, to demonstrate to the world that the commonly accepted stereotype of the Jew is false?

[11] However, according to Abba Eban, *My People* (1968): "Jews were refused admittance into Massachusetts and Connecticut by the Puritans, whose idea of religious liberty was linked to their own brand of faith. However, in liberal Maryland and in Rhode Island, where freedom of conscience was an unshakable principle, they found acceptance."

[12] Jeremy Bentham, *In Defence of Usury* (1787).

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I interpret in the same way the evidence assembled by Wilson and Banfield that Jews (and "Yankees") tend to adopt a "community-serving conception" of the public interest, and to vote against their own immediate self-interest, in larger proportions than most other groups.[13]

I interpret also in this way the attempt by Fuchs to trace Jewish "liberalism" to Jewish values and the negative reaction of Jewish critics to Sombart's book. If, like me, you regard competitive capitalism as the economic system that is most favourable to individual freedom, to creative accomplishments in technology and the arts, and to the widest possible opportunities for the ordinary man, than you will regard Sombart's assignment to the Jews of a key role in the development of capitalism as high praise. You will, as I do, regard his book as philo-Semitic. On the other hand, if you are trying your level best to demonstrate that Jews are dedicated to selfless public service in a socialist state, that commerce and money-lending were activities forced on them by their unfortunate circumstances and were wholly foreign to their natural bent, then you will regard Sombart as an anti-Semite simply reinforcing the stereotype against which you are battling. In this vein, the *Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia* says in its article on Sombart: "He *accused* the Jews of having created capitalism" (my italics).

The complementary character of the final two explanations is, I trust, clear. Whence comes the value structure that puts service to the general public above concern for oneself and one's close family—government employment above private business—political activity above commercial activity—love of mankind in general above concern for men in particular—social responsibility above individual responsibility? Very largely from the collectivist trend of thought to which Jews contributed so much for the reasons advanced by Cohn.

Consider, for a moment, the reaction to the anti-Semitic stereotype by a 19th-century English philosophical radical steeped in Benthamite utilitarianism—by a David Ricardo, James Mill, even Thomas Malthus. Could one of them ever have termed the allegation that Jews created capitalism an *accusation*? They would have termed it high praise. They would have regarded widespread emphasis on rational profit calculation as just what was needed to promote "the greatest good of the greatest number", emphasis on the individual rather than the society as a corollary of belief in freedom, and so on.

[13] James Q. Wilson and Edward C. Banfield, "Public-Regardingness as a Value Premise in Voting Behaviour", *American Political Science Review*, LVIII, 4 (Dec. 1964), pp. 876–887; "Political Ethos Revisited", *American Political Science Review*, LXV, 4 (Dec. 1971), pp. 1048–1062. The similarity between the Jews and the Yankees in some of the characteristics examined by Wilson and Banfield is some evidence, if rather weak evidence, for the influence of religion and culture in view of the connection between Puritanism and Judaism.

4. Conclusion

I CONCLUDE THEN, that the chief explanations for the anti-capitalist mentality of the Jews are (*1*) the special circumstances of 19th-century Europe which linked pro-market parties with established religions and so drove Jews to the Left; and (*2*) the subconscious attempt by Jews to demonstrate to themselves and the world the fallacy of the anti-Semitic stereotype. No doubt these two main forces were reinforced, and the views of the Jews altered in detail, by their historical and cultural heritage, which made them especially sensitive to injustice and especially committed to charity. They were reinforced also by whatever the forces are that predispose intellectuals towards the Left.

Whether or not this explanation is a satisfactory resolution of the paradox which was my starting point, it remains true that the ideology of the Jews has been and still is opposed to their self-interest. Except behind the Iron Curtain, this conflict has been mostly potential rather than real. In the West, so long as a large measure of *laissez-faire* capitalism prevailed, the economic drive of the Jews to improve their lot, and to move upward in the economic and social scale, was in no way hindered by the preaching of socialism as an ideal. They could enjoy the luxury of reacting against the anti-Semitic stereotype, yet benefit from the characteristics that that stereotype caricatured. On a much more subtle and sophisticated level, they were in the position of the rich parlour-socialists—of all ethnic and religious backgrounds—who bask in self-righteous virtue by condemning capitalism while enjoying the luxuries paid for by their capitalist inheritance.

AS THE SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT has grown, as the collectivist ideas have achieved acceptance and affected the structure of society, the conflict has become very real. I have already stressed the conflict in Israel that has led to giving a far greater role to market forces than the ideology of the early leaders envisioned. I have been struck more recently in the United States with the emergence of the conflict in reaction to some of the proposals by Senator McGovern in his ill-starred Presidential candidacy. His early proposal (later rescinded) to set a top limit on inheritances produced an immediate reaction from some of those who might have been expected to be and were his strongest supporters. It came home to them that his measures —completely consistent with their professed ideology—would greatly hamper the upward social and economic mobility of which they had been the beneficiaries.

Perhaps the reality of the conflict will end, or at least weaken, the paradox that has been the subject of my essay. If so, it will be a small silver lining in the dark cloud of encroaching collectivism.

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LETTERS

Hayek on Laski

MR JOHN HUNT'S description of Harold J. Laski [ENCOUNTER, March] as a representative of leftish views implies that he was mentally sane. An experience with him on a crucial occasion convinced me that this was not the case. I believe that our colleague at the London School of Economics, Lancelot Beales, is still around to testify to the extraordinary experience of Laski's complete change of opinion within minutes, which seems to me impossible for a healthy mind.

It was in August 1939 when, after a meeting at Cambridge to discuss the eventual move of L.S.E. to Cambridge, Beales, who had already taken a house there, offered to put Laski and me up for the night before our return to London. After dinner Laski had held forth for more than an hour about the marvels of Russian Bolshevism, more enthusiastically and with less restraint than I have heard it praised either before or since. He then had to stop to let us hear the 9 o'clock news of the BBC.

We were told about the conclusion of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The result was an extraordinary explosion by Laski, not only about the treachery of this particular act, but also an unlimited general denunciation of the whole system to which he had given unstinting praise twenty minutes before. My impression was certainly that he was not in the least aware of any change of mind, but that he was honestly indignant about the Russians being even worse scoundrels than one could have expected. I had by that time got used to the unreliability of his stories—our one common interest, book-collecting, had led to his telling me the most extraordinary fisherman's stories—but after that occasion I could no longer regard him as being mentally sane. What puzzles me to the present day is how a mind guided by phantasies could have been taken seriously for so long in a political party.

F. A. HAYEK

University of Freiburg

Quote Unquote

THE TROUBLE WITH unmasking "The Art of Misquotation" as Melvin J. Lasky does (ENCOUNTER, March) is that certain artists in misquoting smuggle in their lines as fast as they get caught out. And if Lasky wants to take a phrase of Brecht's back to Shakespeare and even the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament, he had better watch out for his exposed flanks over the centuries.

I seriously wonder if the lines attributed to Brecht about a-war-breaking-out-and-nobody-turning-up ever got written by B.B. It would seem to me to be a convenient propagandistic attribution by the Peace movement in Germany, latching on to a good name. I refer you to the October 1983 number of the bulletin "*Fachdienst Germanistik*" which, with some old-fashioned Teutonic scholarship, tries to get to the bottom of this form of sloganeering.

Apparently in a book published in 1971 by Robert Reisner entitled *Graffiti* there is on p.190 a reference to a slogan, "Supposing they had a war and nobody came. . . ." (Reisner is the source for the widespread scribble: "*God is Dead*" (*Nietzsche*) "*Nietzsche is dead*" (*God*).

But further literary detective work reveals that in Carl Sandburg's book (1936) entitled *The People, Yes*, there is a dialogue in which a little American girl says, "*Sometimes they'll give a war and nobody will come.*" Readers must have loved the line. In the book about one of the Marx Brothers called *Harpo Speaks* (1961), this is referred to as one of Harpo's favourite anecdotes from—Thornton Wilder! It is, to be sure, a familiar structure for gags and one-line jokes of all sorts. In recent days we've heard: "Just imagine, it's Tuesday and nobody's watching *Dallas*! . . ." Also: "Think of it, they're giving away free cocktails, all on the house, and nobody knows where! . . ." Or: "What do you know, it's Sunday, and nobody's buying *The News of the World*! . . ."

As I write I have just heard that if I will look at p.503 of volume II of Bert Brecht's *Collected Poems* as published by Suhrkamp I will find the verses as originally quoted. I have looked. I don't find them there. I will check again with another edition, perhaps with better luck.

But there is surely a lesson here. Just think of it, all the good quotes when you get around to checking them are just not there. . . .

FRANZ BUND

Zurich

A Yalta Memory

THE RECENT FLURRY of interest in the Yalta conference [Michael Charlton "The Eagle & the Small Birds", ENCOUNTER, June, July–August, September–October] prompts me to send you a few of my recollections from the period (and I have recorded them in a recent personal exchange with Ambassador Harriman). At that time I was an aide to my old former professor from Krakow, Stanislav Kutrzeba, who participated in the Moscow conference for the formation of a Polish coalition government.

First I would like to describe just how the Polish "delegation" was whisked away to Moscow. As it happens, we were travelling by train to the Soviet Union at the invitation of the government, as a group of unsuspecting tourists. Midway between Warsaw and Moscow a small plane landed along the side of the tracks and stopped the train. A young Red Army officer emerged and pompously informed our astonished group that "the people on this train represent the democratic parties of pre-war Poland and are directed by Stalin to participate in negotiating the formation of a coalition Polish government, according to directives of the Yalta conference, etc. etc. . . ." This ritual had a touch of imperial majesty, if without the glitter. Needless to say the assembled passengers were stunned at first, then overwhelmed with emotion. No one knew of the provisions of Yalta—we hardly had heard about the conference at all. The tourists turned swiftly delegates. The group did, in fact, contain a few pre-war Polish leaders from the democratic camp—a meagre representation, since the majority perished in the War or in the camps, both Nazi and Soviet. We thus proceeded to Moscow, and we settled in the luxury of the Metropol. Professor Kutrzeba asked me to stay on with him, as he needed me also as a translator.

During the ensuing negotiations Professor Kutrzeba and his colleagues leaned strongly on Averell Harriman's advice. Ambassador Harriman was credited with persuading them to compromise with Molotov's formula for bringing Prime Minister Mikolajczyk from London to the so-called Lublin government. Yet my old professor felt a quiver along his spine in presentiment of Russian bad faith; a clairvoyant thought as it turned out.

A small incident afterwards, during the big banquet at the Kremlin, illustrates the kind of charm Stalin was capable of displaying. Perceptive about another old man's needs, Stalin saw that Kutrzeba was restless in our corner, and he came all the way over from the head of the table and asked (I was translating) if the professor by chance needed a guide to the toilet. Thereupon, hearing an enthusiastic affirmative, Stalin proceeded with us across the big hall to his private and, I must add, royal lavatory. I remember experiencing a Beckett-absurdist sensation—standing there urinating next to Stalin. He, never leaving politics alone, asked Kutrzeba if the Polish group was happy with the results of the conference. I'll never forget the chilling impact of Stalin's words as he was buttoning up—"Moscow's arms are long. . . . They'll hug you if you are a friend . . . and if not, they will choke you." Stalin's slanted eyes glittered in his devious, half-charming smile while I was groping for a proper Polish verb for "choking."

I may add that after the collapse of the coalition government in Warsaw, I decided to defect, but without fanfare. (For the last 20 years I've been a professor at Columbia University, School of the Arts.) And, curiously enough, I had a sense of the Soviet "touch" again while in Afghanistan during my last sabbatical leave, teaching at Kabul University, in 1978. History, at least for me, seems to repeat itself in some small ways.

STEFAN SHARFF

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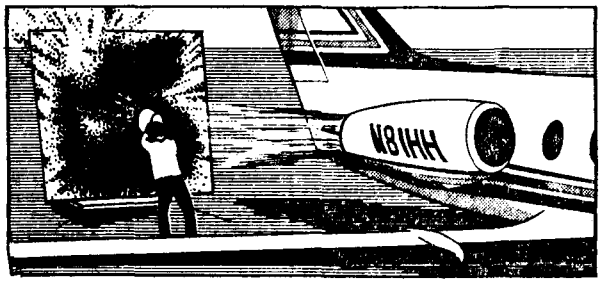
Life & Letters Today



London

JUMBO ART & JET SET: *A new form for the Jet Age has been claimed by German-born Juergen Prince von Anhalt. By hurling paint into the exhausts of jet aircraft engines, the prince has created giant paintings and enhanced his reputation as eccentric international aesthete.*

Four of his 18ft-by-24ft canvases have already been sold to European collectors for between $100,000 and $200,000.

Canvases were wedged into a mobile hydraulic ladder, normally used by mechanics working on the high tails of planes, and rolled into the firing line about 20 ft behind the engine.

Last week, the Prince who studied painting in Rome, Madrid and London moved to Palm Springs, Florida, in a bid to raise $3.5 million for a jet art studio fitted with seven of the biggest jumbo jet engines.

The concept came to the Prince, who depends on sponsors and family funds, two years ago during a seizure of despondency caused by the failure of an earlier oceanic thought. He had organised a human "Middle East peace chain" composed of 500,000 people holding hands from Cairo to Jerusalem, but it was abandoned at the last minute.

While riding out his depression in a Jerusalem hotel room, he heard a jet fly overhead. In that instant, he said, the whole concept of Jet Art was born.

SUNDAY TIMES

London

QUEEN'S ENGLISH: *Mr Enoch Powell asks when the convention that ministers do not advise upon or take responsibility for the Queen's Christmas and Commonwealth Day messages was "declared".*

Conventions are not always declared [Lord Blake explains]. They can grow from long usage, as has occurred in this case.

Mr Powell also asks what Ministers accept responsibility for the convention "remembering that advice that is not requisite is also advice". But most constitutional experts agree that there are, and long have been, matters (a few) on which the Crown does not need to take ministerial advice.

If ministerial advice is not needed, ministerial advice that it is not needed is also not needed.

THE TIMES

Berlin

WHAT'S IN A NAME?: **The curious thing about the recent boom in Wild West literature in the East German Communist Republic is that the famous German author of "Westerns", Karl May, is allowed to be published again (and is selling in the millions)—but the name of his beloved Indian character, *Winnetou*, is on the black (or red-pencil) list.**

*There was a strange alarm in some official circles last year when a report (mistaken, it turned out to be) circulated to the effect that "**Winnetou**" was among the most favourite names among young parents choosing a first name for their babies. No need for excitement: no Winnetous around, yet.*

THERE IS AN OFFICIAL **East German list of first names, and it has some 10,000 entries. But "*Winnetou*" is not among them for registry. Despite the Karl May renaissance, it is not likely ever to be approved. It falls into the category of so-called "literary fantasy names", and is thus *verboten*.**

*Birth registry officials often turn to philologists for assistance. They want to "realise as much democracy as possible" and try to approve names which are recognised as being in official usage anywhere in the world. As a consequence foreign first names have become more and more popular among young East German parents. English and French names lead the list, Russian names are at the bottom. Even in the small towns and villages, deep in the provinces, one finds "**Steve** . . . **Marcel** . . . **Patrick**." On the female side: "**Nancy** . . . **Stefanie**." It is reported that "**Tyrone** (pronounced Teiron) and "**Kenny**" are also coming up fast.*

SO THERE IS AN EXPANDING FREEDOM, **or "democracy" if you will, in names, and even more liberty in their pronunciation. In Leipzig, thick with the regional Saxon accent, "*Genéviève*" becomes "*Scheneveevah*".**

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

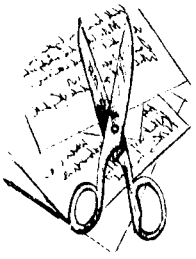
New York City

WIDOW OF VULNERABILITY: **It does not surprise me [Ann Landers writes] that widowed women do not wish to be known as "the widows." They need not be reminded yet another time that their husbands no longer are living. No one refers to their male counterparts as "the widowers." They are called "eligible men." Accordingly, many prefer to be called "single ladies."**

It seems, however, that "single women" is a shade better than "single ladies." I suggest it as a compromise.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Warsaw



SUBVERSIVE PLOT: **Poland's state television has shown the controversial American television film about a nuclear war, "The Day After." But a key word in the film was blurred, sources with access to the script said.**

They said the blurring occurred early in the film when a newscaster referred to reports that East German troops had "rebelled" against their Warsaw Pact allies, which include Poland. The imagined rebellion is one of the incidents leading to an inter-continental nuclear exchange in the film.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

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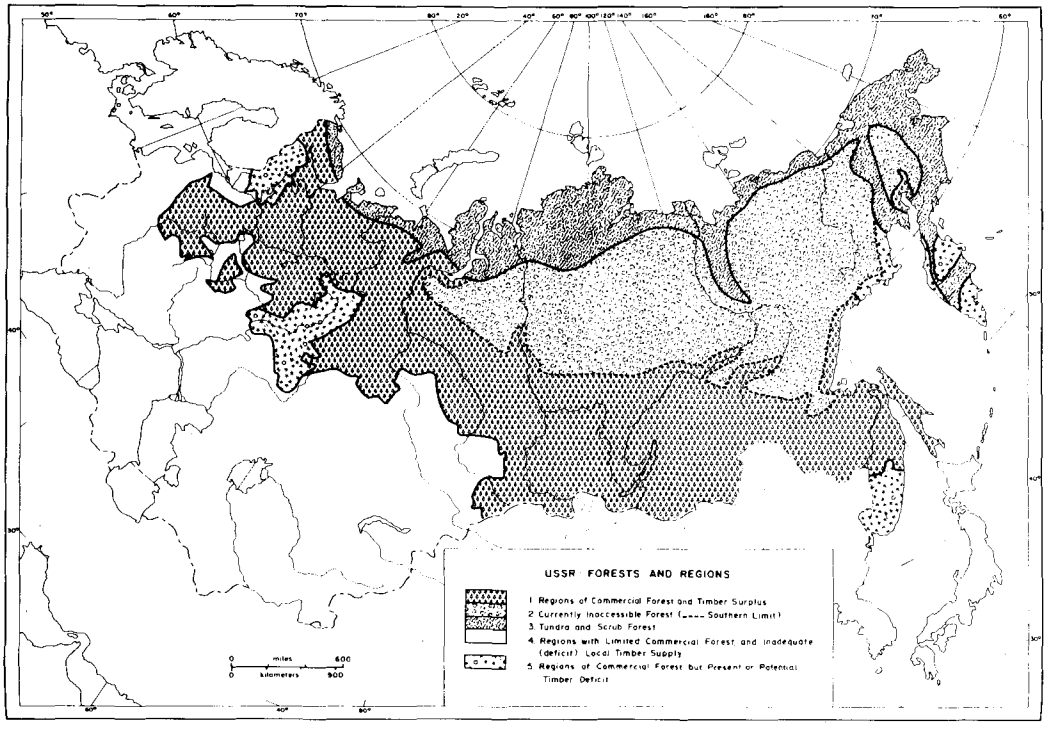
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1. Regions of Commercial Forest and Timber Surplus
2. Currently Inaccessible Forest (---- Southern Limit)
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0 miles 600
0 kilometers 900

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